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Defending the Constitution

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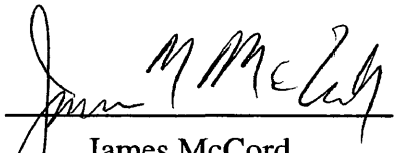

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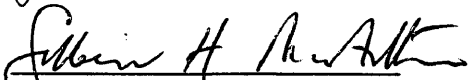

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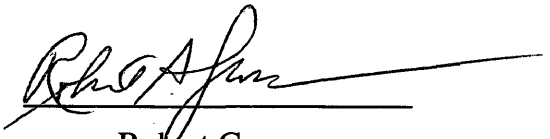

Robert Gross

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Abstract

This essay concentrates on three newspapers, the *Sun*, the *True Briton*, and the *Anti-Jacobin*, as published in London between 1793 and 1798. At a time when the French Revolution sparked controversy in Britain, stimulating debate on British ruling systems and social framework, these newspapers were excellent examples of the loyalist point of view. This study analyses the content of these publications, including both its language and ideas, and places it within the context of eighteenth-century loyalist thought. In doing so, the importance of the press during the uncertainty of the early years of the war between Britain and Revolutionary France, is demonstrated, particularly its role in the struggle to suppress perceived threats of revolution.

Introduction

> Political imperfections we may occasionally be subject to, but with that possibility we have this exclusive possession, a Constitution whose singular merit it is, to have interwoven these with a power to correct from time to time its own defects . . . Indeed, it is a truth which never can be too much reflected upon, or set forth, that the British Constitution is the most perfect in nature, and the most practically beneficial in operation, that does, or ever did, perhaps that ever may exist; and that the national character of Britons is not less proudly eminent. Probably they are inseparable and must stand or fall together.

So proclaimed the *Sun*, a London newspaper strongly affiliated with the British government, on the 27th of March, 1793. The appearance of such language at that time had added significance, as less than four years had passed since the French had initiated drastic changes in the structure of their government, and only a month earlier, war had been declared between the two nations. The French had also proclaimed their willingness to aid those struggling to claim their liberties *vis-à-vis* oppressive governments. In Britain, revolutionary societies advocated reform, or even new forms of government. On all sides, instability threatened the British Constitution, leading loyalists to combat perceived radicalism by speaking out in favor of the government and the social order.

Newspaper editors and contributors had their own distinct role to play in the controversies unleashed by the events in France. This involved preparing articles for print that reflected events, but also sought to influence readers. Certainly, one of the objectives of the press was to keep readers informed, although some newspapers were better suited to this than others. The printed word was also a means of persuading others, however, and with an issue as divisive as the French Revolution, most newspapers subscribed to one side of the debate or the other. Despite a long-standing ambivalent relationship between the government and the press, there existed a number of papers in the 1790s that supported the British Constitution against potential subversion.

This essay concentrates on three such loyalist newspapers, the *Sun,* the *True Briton*, and the *Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner*. The appearance of these three publications provided a bracket around the war-time experience of loyalists in the 1790s. The first two, founded in late 1792 and early 1793, respectively, emerged at the same time as the outbreak of hostilities and a wave of loyalist activity in Britain. The third, a short-lived weekly founded in late 1797 and continuing into the first half of 1798, appeared just as this swell of pro-government activity, with its series of legislative actions designed to curtail radicalism and its outpouring of loyalist literature, was starting to wind down. Of the many avowed pro-government newspapers in circulation at the time, these three were most closely tied to the ministry both fiscally and in terms of personnel. Consequently, the government could count on them to print material favorable to ministerial policy. All three were connected, moreover, both explicitly and implicitly, through similarities in the backgrounds of their contributors and editors and in the circumstances behind their creation.

In assessing the role of these newspapers, it is important to view them with an "eighteenth-century" eye. That is, the language used by the press must be placed within the context of late eighteenth-century loyalism. The first chapter of this essay thus provides a background of Constitutional thought of the period, loyalist activities in the 1790s, and finally, the use of newspapers to support the government. With the understanding that newspaper content was to an extent used as a tool to elicit support for the government, the second chapter then explores the content of these three newspapers, with particular attention to both language and discourse. Ultimately, these newspapers reveal a loyalist thought strongly based on support by Britons of all class, gender, and

nationality, and dependent on the image of the Constitution as a focus for allegiance. In studying these ideas as manifested in these papers, this essay hopes to create a better understanding of the nature of British loyalism in the 1790s.

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Constitutionalism • The French Revolution Debate • The Loyalist Press

Mainstream loyalist thought in the late eighteenth century was dominated by a traditional Whig ideology established by the Revolutionary Settlement of 1688 and upheld by the British Constitution.[1] This line of thought was heavily influenced by historic notions of a strong, yet not absolute, Protestant monarchy, an established Church, and a natural upper-class leadership. The majority of British political leaders in the century were Whigs of some persuasion in that they subscribed to these ideals in one form or another. Loyalism inevitably involved praise for the British Constitution, considered by its apologists as the best system of government in the world. Support for the Constitution was evident throughout the century, whether in the form of pamphlets, cartoons, newspapers, holidays in celebration of the monarchy, or even Church-and-King mobs. These justifications for the status quo differed considerably in their approach and content, but one aspect remained a constant: the affirmation of the British Constitution as an example of good government.

Eighteenth-century British literature was full of references to the Constitution. This phenomenon was indicative of the reverence for the "ancient constitution" steeped in common law tradition that has been noted by historians such as J.G.A. Pocock as a contextual basis for eighteenth-century political thought.[2] As historian Bernard Schilling has stated, "The chorus of complacent praise for the English constitution is an unceasing

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[1]See Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 33 and R.W. Harris, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, Humanities Press, 1963), 25.

[2] J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 208-223.

refrain from one end of the eighteenth century to the other."[3] More recently, historian Frank O'Gorman echoed these sentiments with his assessment of eighteenth-century politics:

> Yet political action was vindicated by reference to an agreed set of criteria. The starting-point was the universal reverence for the Constitution. Most Englishmen anticipated Edmund Burke's belief that the English enjoyed the most perfect form of government in existence.[4]

This Constitutionalism provided the background upon which loyalists in the 1790s based their ideas. This was the context in which government supporters such as Edmund Burke, John Bowles, Arthur Young, John Reeves, and Hannah More, as well as the contributors to the loyalists newspapers, composed their writings.

Pro-government sentiments emphasized the virtues of moderation, balance, and protection offered by the Constitution, and these arguments did not change much over the course of the eighteenth century.[5] One particular feature of these writers was their tendency to reject overly abstract Constitutional theories, favoring instead concrete illustrations that avoided theoretical doctrines on liberty, rights, and the origins of government. This approach, many argued, reflected the pragmatic nature of the Constitution and the common sense inherent in the British system.[6] According to these defenders, the excellence of the Constitution was virtually a self-evident fact. Lord Justice Braxfield, in presiding over the Sedition Trials in Scotland in 1793, addressed the

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[3]Bernard Schilling, *Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 27.

[4]O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 127.

[5]M.J.C. Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 100.

[6]Schilling, *Conservative England*, 63.

jury in the following manner:

> Now in examining this question, there are two things which you should attend to, which require no proof. The first is, that the British Constitution is the best in the world; -- for the truth of this, gentlemen, I need only appeal to your own feelings.[7]

Justification based on sentimental arguments appealed strongly to British pride, but Constitutionalists recognized that simple emotion was not enough. Thus, a more concrete description of the strengths of the Constitution was utilized as a means of justifying the British system as well.

Pro-government reasoning took the form of justification of both the Constitution itself and its inner workings as well as its relationship with the governed. The two intellectuals most representative of the period in terms of eighteenth-century Constitutional theory were William Blackstone (1723-1780) and William Paley (1743-1805). The works of these two theorists were extremely popular in Britain, and remained the basis for legal and political studies for many decades after their publication. Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69) provided one of the most influential and enduring assessments of British government of the era. Blackstone began his overview of British legal structure, like many of his eighteenth-century contemporaries, by comparing the laws of government to the laws of nature. The legal system, it was believed, followed the same reasonable laws that nature itself subscribed to. Moreover, like nature, Blackstone believed the laws of government had divine origins.[8]

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[7]Lord Braxfield, "Address to the Jury at the Trial of Thomas Muir, Edinburgh," in *The Debate on the French Revolution*, ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 302-303.

[8]William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 38-39.

The purpose of the government as seen by Blackstone and many of his contemporaries was to restrain the conflicts that normally arose between individuals. Man living in a solitary state of existence had no need for laws and government, since there was no danger of property infringement by others. Since man had always existed as part of a society and never in a solitary state, Blackstone argued, the purpose of laws was to protect this society. This discussion rejected the Lockeian concept of an original social contract, as Blackstone and many eighteenth-century intellectuals denied that man had ever lived in an "original," pre-social state. There was no original agreement to enter into society because society had always existed.[9] In making this contention, Blackstone was reiterating the traditional concept of the paternal government: the state created liberty through the protection of society and the security of the individual.

In describing the structure of the British government itself, Blackstone subscribed heavily to the mixed-government theory based on balance and moderation. The three possibilities for a Constitution were democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, he argued:

> . . . these three species of government have, all of them, their several perfections and imperfections. Democracies are usually best calculated to direct the end of a law; aristocracies to invent the means by which that end shall be obtained; and monarchies to carry those means into execution.

Each form of government thus had its strengths, as well as its weaknesses. The British Constitution offered the best solution, according to Blackstone, because it consisted of all three types in the form of the King, Lords, and Commons. In utilizing all three forms, the British system drew upon all the advantages of each type of government without incurring the disadvantages. The monarchy offered the strong central executive; the Lords provided the collective wisdom of the upper class; and the Commons ensured the

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[9]Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 43-47.

representation of all interests of the nation. Moreover, balance was achieved since any two of the three forms counteracted the tyranny of the third:

> . . . there can no inconvenience be attempted by either of the three branches, but will be withstood by one of the other two; each branch being armed with a negative power, sufficient to repel any innovation which it shall think inexpedient or dangerous.

Concluding his discussion on the perfect balance of the government, Blackstone offered a typical eighteenth-century salute to the Constitution:

> But the Constitutional government of this island is so admirably tempered and compounded, that nothing can endanger or hurt it, but destroying the equilibrium of power between one branch of the legislature and the rest.[10]

The preservation of this equilibrium was a central concept, easily used by opponents of reform to oppose changes that might conceivably injure the delicate balance so perfectly encapsulated in the system.

William Paley, in his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), likewise put forth a strong argument in favor of the British Constitution. This work, like the *Commentaries*, was immensely popular with nineteen editions printed within twenty-five years. Many of his ideas were similar to those of Blackstone, reflecting their common eighteenth-century Whig heritage. Like Blackstone, Paley began his treatise by comparing government laws to natural laws. He added another element, however, in the form of religious principles. Both religious and secular laws, he argued, were forms of the same type of structure, divinely ordained:

> . . . we may observe the absurdity of separating natural and revealed religion from each other. The object of both is the same, -- to discover the will of God, -- and, provided we do but discover it, it matters nothing by what means.

Paley then went on to discuss in the *Principles* the form and structure of these laws as

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[10]Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 50-51.

they related to both society and politics. For example, Paley placed a strong emphasis on moral laws in government. This reflected not only the traditional emphasis on government protection, but also the close connection between established religion, the state, and guidance of the individual. The government, he claimed, acts as a moral guide based on both secular laws and the revealed laws of the Scriptures. Here again was evidence of the connection between society and the Constitution that occupied intellectuals of this period.[11]

In describing the relationship between the government and the governed, Paley used the model of the family and military authority. The government, like the father and the military commander, provided authority and protection for its subjects. In turn, society had an obligation to follow this authority, and Paley cited scriptural evidence to justify the Christian duty to remain loyal to the government. Once again the relationship between governor and governed was described as a contractual relationship. Only in extreme cases, when the government had broken this contract, could the state be overthrown. It was then the duty of the governed to reestablish a system that adhered to the original contractual relationship.[12]

Turning to the structure of government itself, the discussion put forward by Paley echoed that of Blackstone closely. Paley proposed three types of government as possibilities: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Since each type of government had its own particular strengths and weaknesses, Paley championed the virtues of mixed

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[11]William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Vol. 1,* 19th ed. (London, 1811) 64, 76.

[12]Paley, *Principles, Vol. 2*, 108, 137-150. Paley's discussion on this contractual relationship should not be confused with Locke's concept of the "original contract." See above, p. 7.

government:

> A mixed government is composed by the combination of two or more of the simple forms of government above described: --and in whatever proportion each form enters into the constitution of a government, in the same proportion may both the advantages and evils, which we have attributed to that form, be expected.

In the British system, this approach was structured perfectly:

> The Government of England, which has been sometimes called a mixed government, sometimes a limited monarchy, is formed by a combination of three regular species of government: the monarch, residing in the King; the aristocracy, in the House of Lords; and the republic, being represented by the House of Commons. The perfection intended by such a scheme of government is, to unite the advantages of the several simple forms, and to exclude the inconveniences.[13]

The British Constitution achieved two kinds of balance through this system. The balance of power, according to Paley, meant that each branch of government checked each other to prevent "the abuse of excess." The balance of interests meant that all elements of society were represented in the three forms of government, which likewise provided a check against any one interest, such as the aristocracy as represented in the Lords, for instance, from furthering its own situation at the expense of other interests. As these arguments showed, Constitutional arguments had not changed much in the twenty years separating Blackstone and Paley, and indeed, they would remain the same during the French Revolution.

In this manner, Blackstone and Paley gave voice to many eighteenth-century intellectuals who saw, in the British Constitution, an exemplary form of government. To these "Constitutionalists," the virtues of the British system were self-evident. The purpose of the state was to protect the individual, particularly with regard to property ownership. Through this paternalism, the government both prescribed and maintained

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[13]Paley, *Principles, Vol. 2*, 170-173, 195, 204-208.

the natural structure of society. Drawing strongly on the Whig ideology prevalent after 1688, these Britons supported a mixed and balanced government consisting of a Hanoverian monarch and an effective Parliament. Within these institutions were represented the three types of government: monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. The strengths of this system as seen by its apologists were its close connections with the established Church and the leadership of the aristocracy. Reform was viewed with caution, change only being acceptable in a limited sense dictated not by theoretical concerns, but by the realities of the moment. Drawing on this background, adherents of the Constitution became the potent loyalists of the 1790s with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

ii

The Revolution added a new sense of urgency to the political questions that had long been a part of British society. As William Windham claimed in a famous parliamentary speech in 1790, the Revolution put the issue of government reform in a whole new context:

> But, Sir, were I even disposed to approve of the right hon. gentleman's notions of reform, I should still feel it my duty to object in the strongest manner to the time in which he has thought proper to bring them forward. What, would he recommend you to repair your house in the hurricane season?[14]

As the remarks made by Windham suggest, the overthrow of the French *ancien regime* brought a new level of seriousness to considerations not just on the state of affairs across

[14]William Windham, "Speech on Mr. Flood's Motion, House of Commons, 4 March 1790" (excerpt) in *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800* ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 105.

the Channel, but in Britain as well. Most of these reflections were phrased in the same terms that had long characterized eighteenth-century political issues.

Although early reactions to the Revolution were in many cases quite positive, reflecting the long history of rivalry between Britain and the French *ancien regime* and the poor reputation of the Bourbon monarchy among Britons, opinion soon turned against the new system across the Channel. This anti-revolutionary sentiment emerged in opposition to those in Britain who supported the French. One of the early, controversial works in support of the French Revolution was the sermon delivered by Richard Price (1723-1791), the Dissenting Minister, to the London Revolutionary Society on November 4, 1789 entitled *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*. Price, like many, saw the actions of the French in terms of his estimation of the British 1688 Revolution: the French, like Britons, had "the right to choose our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves."[15] The interpretation of 1688 offered by Price, however, was highly controversial, and most non-radical Britons did not believe that the Glorious Revolution had involved the choosing of a government by the people.

Price's sermon was an early salvo in a conflict whose battle lines emerged as many Britons increasingly saw more evil than good in the actions of the French. The earliest opponents of the Revolution were religious officials, particularly Anglican

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[15]Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (excerpt) in *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800* ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 61.

clergymen such as William Jones and George Horne.[16] For leaders of the Anglican Church, the French Revolution violated the religious duty of loyalty to the government that had traditionally been taught. To revolt against the state was to reject the doctrine of passive obedience, an old Tory idea that still lingered among many church officials. Moreover, the attacks made on the Catholic Church in France and opposition to the clergy were a dangerous affront to established religion as a whole, convincing religious leaders to take an even stronger stance against the Revolution.

Perhaps the most decisive argument, however, came from Edmund Burke (1729-1797), a disciple of the old Rockingham Whigs. Unlike many of his contemporary politicians, Burke immediately denounced the Revolution as an illegitimate turn of events and a potential threat to the British system. His *Reflections on the Revolution in France* began as a letter to a correspondent in France, Charles-Jean-François de Pont, written in November of 1789 in response to Price's sermon that same month. A year later, on November 1 of 1790, *Reflections* emerged in full pamphlet form, unleashing a dialogue concerning the true character of the events in France. Within a few weeks over 5,000 copies were sold, and as many as 30,000 in the next two years.[17] Windham, a fellow Whig, noted in his diary at the time:

> Never was there, I suppose, a work so valuable in its kind, or that displayed powers of so extraordinary a sort. It is work that may seem capable of overturning the National Assembly, and turning the stream of opinion throughout

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[16]See Robert Hole, "English Sermons and Tracts as Media of Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1799" in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* ed. Mark Philp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19-21.

[17]James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 75-81; Mark Philp, "Introduction" in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

Europe.[18]

With Burke's *Reflections*, the first concise and widespread defense of the Constitution in response to the French Revolution appeared.

Much has been written about Edmund Burke and the subsequent debate created when Thomas Paine (1737-1809) published, in February of 1791, his *Rights of Man* as a reply to *Reflections*.[19] What made Burke unique in terms of the events of the 1790s was his immediate and inflexible denunciation of the events in France, even as many of his fellow Whig politicians wavered on the issue. Whereas quite a number of Britons initially celebrated the fall of the old regime, Burke denied the validity of both the National Assembly and the means by which it had gained power. What was truly dangerous, according to Burke, was the adoption of French principles in Britain. In his estimation, the arguments proposed by Price in support of the events in France, particularly concerning the validity of the monarchy based on a choice of the people, were both incorrect and dangerous. On the contrary, Burke argued, the perfect nature of the British Constitution offered a favorable contrast to the instability of France and was not to be compromised by radical influences. The defense offered by Burke drew on much of the same rhetoric that had long characterized eighteenth-century political arguments, with its origins in the reverence for a balanced Constitution and the social and political traditions it embodied. Under Burke, as under Blackstone or Paley, the

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[18]William Windham, 7 November 1790 diary entry (excerpt) in *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800* ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 81.

[19]See analysis offered by Boulton, *Language of Politics*, 75-133; Clark, *English Society*, 247-257; Gregory Claeys, "The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought" *History of Political Thought* 11 no. 1 (Spring 1990): 59-80; and Michael Freeman, *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 16-34, 54-129, 218-234.

Constitution was an excellent example of the virtue of moderation and equilibrium.

Reflections touched off a number of responses in 1791 in defense of the affairs in France of which the most notable was Paine's *Rights of Man*, but also included works by James Mackintosh (*Vindicae Gallicae*) and Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Men*), among others. Paine released Part One of *Rights of Man* in February as a direct answer to Burke, vindicating the principles of the French and attacking the Burkean concept of the perfect nature of the British system. The radical ideas of Paine and the popularity of the *Rights of Man*, which, with its simpler prose and lower price than *Reflections*, outsold it at the rate of 200,000 in three years, seemed to exemplify the very infiltration of Revolutionary principles that Burke had warned about. The remainder of 1791 reflected the rising tensions of the time. The Society for Constitutional Information (SCI), in eclipse since its days of agitation in favor of reform in the 1780s, was revived as members saw new opportunities to press for change. Rioting broke out in Birmingham, instigated in part by local Tory magistrates, whose violence focused on resident Dissenters, including the controversial reformer Joseph Priestley.[20] And in the House of Commons, Burke, disturbed by the continuing support of the French offered by his old political friend Charles James Fox (1749-1806), broke with him publicly during debate over the Quebec Government Bill.

The next two years, however, witnessed the strongest responses as events in France became increasingly radical. A new society devoted to the cause of reform appeared, the London Corresponding Society (LCS), founded in January of 1792 and led by Thomas Hardy. The most revolutionary aspect of the LCS was its lower membership

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[20]E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 73-74.

dues, making it accessible to laborers. The reform-oriented wing of the Whigs formed the "Friends of the People" in April, an association devoted to more equal Parliamentary representation that counted among its members Charles Grey, Thomas Erskine, and Richard Sheridan, causing much concern among other, more traditional party members. As with the break between Burke and Fox a few months earlier, cracks were beginning to form in the old Whig opposition that had so long been a part of Parliament.

The following month, the government became sufficiently concerned about radicalism, particularly as originating through the dissemination of the works of Paine, that it issued a Proclamation Against Seditious Writings. According to tradition, copies of the proclamation were placed out for signing around the country; 71 counties and 315 towns responded favorably to the king's mandate. In June, Paine was sentenced *in absentia* (having fled to France) under the proclamation. By fall, the spy network that had long been employed by the government was being directed to gather information on the radical societies in order to keep the ministry aware of potentially subversive activities.[21] These sentiments seemed even more appropriate at the time after the escalation of violence in the Revolution with the September 1792 massacres in France and victories by the French armies at Valmy and Jemappes that same fall. By December, the government was sufficiently concerned about the possibility of uprisings to call out the militia.

Loyalist opposition to potential anti-government activity also became explicit in November when John Reeves (1752?-1829) founded the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (APLP). The announcement

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[21]Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 24, 35.

of the founding of the association was printed in the evening newspaper formed that October, the pro-government *Sun*. Most historians have argued that the government, while not directly responsible for the APLP, had full knowledge of the intentions of Reeves to create the association.[22] Its founding resolution proclaimed:

> Considering the danger to which the Publick Peace and Order are exposed by the circulating of mischievous Opinions, founded upon plausible but false reasoning; and that this circulation is principally carried on by the industry of Clubs and Societies of various denominations in many parts of the kingdom: It appears to us, that it is now become the duty of all Persons, who wish well to their Native Country, to endeavour, in their several neighborhoods, to prevent the sad effects of such mischievous industry . . .[23]

Under this mobilization of pro-government support, Reeves's association, from its headquarters at the Crown and Anchor in London, began to pass out loyalist propaganda, organize speeches and dinners, and encourage suppression of radicals; soon, provincial branch societies numbering in the thousands supplemented activity in the capital.[24]

Even as events across the Channel drifted further along the path towards radicalism with the trial and execution of Louis XVI in the first two months of 1793, culminating in the outbreak of war between England and France in February, loyalist support in Britain began to gain more ground. In January of 1793 the *True Briton* joined the *Sun* in circulation, giving the government two newspapers devoted first and foremost to pro-Constitutional sentiments. In terms of the controversy elicited by the Burke-Paine

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[22]See Austin Mitchell, "The Association Movement of 1792-93" *The Historical Journal* 4 (1961): 59; and Donald Ginter, "The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-1793 and British Public Opinion" *The Historical Journal* 9 (1966): 179.

[23]"Resolutions of 20 November 1792" (excerpt) in *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800* ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 276-277.

[24] This is the number given by the APLP itself. See Mitchell, "The Association Movement," 62.

debate, the declaration of war in February tended to make pro-reform literature akin to treason, a fact that stifled the debate that had raged for the previous two years.[25] In fact, after the declaration of war, loyalist writings tended to dominate the scene, not only because of patriotic sentiments, but because it became difficult to publish works that contained radical ideas: the year 1793 was a high point in provincial prosecutions for sedition and seditious libel.[26] The famous trials in Edinburgh and London of 1793-94 also demonstrated this newfound coolness towards perceived "Jacobin" elements at home.

It was not just that the government feared instability caused by radicalism, either. The war itself was a new kind of conflict in which the enemy was not simply France, but the Revolution as well. Once the French declared their willingness to aid uprisings in other nations, it became a war aim to attack Jacobins, whether in France or in Britain. George III understood this objective, as did his ministers and many member of Parliament.[27] Edmund Burke described the conflict not as "the cause of nation as against nation; but . . . the cause of mankind against those who have projected the subversion of that order of things, under which our part of the world has so long flourished . . ."[28] To assist in these efforts, the government began passing a series of laws beginning in 1793 and continuing through the turn of the century. While not all of these acts were effective,

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[25]Boulton, *Politics of Language*, 96.

[26]Clive Emsley, "Repression, 'Terror,' and the Rule of Law in England During the Decade of the French Revolution" *English Historical Review* 100 (1985): 807.

[27]H.T. Dickinson, "Introduction," in *Britain and the French Revolution* ed. H.T. Dickinson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 2.

[28]Edmund Burke, "Letter to the Comte de Mercy, 1793" in *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800* ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 458.

or even necessary, they reflected the concerns of the government to fight off subversion and their willingness to pass legislation to do so. Two acts appeared in 1793, the Alien Act requiring all foreigners entering English ports to register at the customs house and giving Home Secretaries the power to deport suspicious individuals, and the Traitorous Correspondence Act, making it treasonable to engage in activities such as supplying arms or money to France.[29]

In Parliament, shifting political coalitions mirrored the nation's transition to mobilization. Increasingly, the Whig opposition, led for over a decade by Charles James Fox, began to splinter into a number of factions. The Friends of the People and its small, core group of reform-oriented Whigs became isolated from the rest of the party. On the other end of the spectrum, pro-war and anti-reform Opposition members began defecting to the government. Fox, who tried to disassociate himself from the Whig reform association but not reform itself, was forced to try to appease both sides in an effort to keep the Whigs together. This task was virtually impossible: a motion for Parliamentary reform initiated by Charles Grey and supported by Fox in the Commons in May of 1793 was defeated by a count of 282 to 41.[30] Clearly, a majority of the Parliament was hostile by this point to reform, thus opening the possibility of a larger coalition between Whigs and the ministry. In July of 1794, this was precisely the case when a large core of the Whigs led by the Duke of Portland, enticed also by offers of positions within the ministry

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[29]Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars* (Totowa (N.J.): Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), 20-21.

[30]Brown, *The French Revolution in English History*, 102-103.

for prominent members, joined the government of Prime Minister William Pitt.[31] The Opposition at this point now included only the small group of 41 members, led by Fox, in favor of reform and for the most part opposed to the war.

The remainder of the decade was distinguished by a number of legislative acts passed to maintain stability in Britain. An immediate impetus for action was in response to riots perpetuated by bad harvests in 1795 and into 1796. Even George III was not able to escape violence: his carriage was attacked in London in October, 1795, when a rock was thrown through its window. Pitt's government thus secured the Two Acts in December, 1795: The Seditious Meetings Act and the Treasonable Practices Act. The former provided stricter regulations for public meetings, while the latter made criticism of the government a punishable offense. Speaking in favor of the Seditious Meetings Act, William Wilberforce used typical pro-Constitutional language:

> He begged the House to take a considerate review of all that had passed relative to the subject before them for the last three years; so long it was since attempts had been making, by every species of art and industry, to poison the minds of the people of this country, to instil into them jealousies and suspicions, and to excite a contempt for the British Constitution . . . in the numerous publication by which their opinions were disseminated, there was a marked contempt for every thing sacred, an avowed opposition to religion, as well as to the constitution of Great Britain.[32]

Despite the serious nature of the Two Acts, the Seditious Meetings Act was invoked only once, the Treasonable Practices Act not at all.[33]

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[31]Emsley, *British Society*, 23-24; Frank O'Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967) 208-209.

[32]William Wilberforce, "Speech in the Debate on the Seditious Meetings Bill, House of Commons, 10 November 1795" (excerpt) in *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800* ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Nicholas Kaye, Ltd., 1950), 289-290.

[33]Emsley, "Repression," 812-813.

Invasion scares in 1796 and naval mutinies at Spithead and Nore in 1797 inspired another round of acts designed to fight unrest. The invasion threat was very real: in December, 1796, a French force led by General Hoche set sail for Ireland, but was forced to return because of bad weather; early in 1797, another invasion force actually managed to land in Wales, only to be defeated a few days later; and between October 1797 and May 1798, the French Army of England led by young Napoleon Bonaparte camped ominously on the coast of France.[34] The situation in Parliament also made legislative action easier because the Foxite opposition actually abstained from attending the House between 1797 and 1801 after a second motion for reform by Grey failed. Among the subsequent legislative acts were the Seduction from Duty and Allegiance Act (1797) making it treasonable to entice a member of the armed forces into revolt (a direct response to the naval mutinies), the Administering of Unlawful Oaths Act (1797) prohibiting secret societies bound by oaths, the Suppression of Seditious and Treasonable Societies Act (1799), the Combination Act (1799-1800) outlawing worker trade unions, and, in 1799, an update of the Newspaper Act (1798) requiring all presses to be registered and the names and addresses of all publishers to appear on printed material.

Legislation was just one tool in the fight against Jacobinism. The numerous sermons, pamphlets, and demonstrations organized both by explicitly loyalist groups such as the APLP and by independent writers, clergymen, and activists continued to provide support as well. The government also relied on the press. Among the many loyalist newspapers in circulation, the *Sun* and the *True Briton* remained most closely associated with the ministry's pro-Constitutional sentiments, to which the government added another

[34]Emsley, *British Society*, 56-65.

publication, the *Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner* in 1797. These papers provided a means through which Britons defended the Constitution against war-time radical attacks. Moreover, the language used in these newspapers drew heavily on the political heritage of the eighteenth century created by Whig and Tory ideologies, Constitutional theorists such as Blackstone and Paley, and anti-radical spokesmen such as Burke. Overall, these publications were important components of loyalist support.

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Newspapers were a vital part of British life by the end of the eighteenth-century. The press reported on shipping news, for example, a topic of great importance for a nation expanding economically and trading extensively overseas. Also popular were reports on crime and sports, as well as accounts of royal celebrations and outings. Most sources of information were from other newspapers and printed sources, and much reporting was a sort of cut-and-paste affair. Foreign news was particularly hard to come by, since paid correspondents were well beyond the financial means of the average paper. Foreign newspapers provided a ready source of information, though occasionally unreliable in time of conflict such as during the Revolution. All too often, the lack of information on Continental news had to be excused by a delay in receiving the mail. On the other hand, the press was particularly aided in the 1790s by a few correspondents positioned strategically in southern English ports such as Dover, Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Falmouth and charged with the task of forwarding news and mail to London.[35]

Political coverage was important, and reporting became more sophisticated as the

[35]Black, *English Press*, 89-91.

century progressed despite the uncertain relationship between politicians and the government on the one side, and the press on the other. Politicians had a long-standing suspicion of the press, considering it prone to "licentiousness" and spiteful criticism of the government. Nevertheless, the press became an increasingly salient feature in British political culture. Some of the biggest milestones occurred in the 1760s and 1770s. John Wilkes (1727-1797) and the *North Briton* affair, for instance, revealed the potential explosiveness of mixing politics and the printed word. After 1771, newspapers were allowed to print parliamentary debates, previously available only to those involved and to a few spectators situated in the gallery above.[36] Political coverage and debate became a central feature in paper content, often in a partisan manner, and at least one historian has suggested that newspapers increasingly espoused specific political stances in order to target and maintain a loyal readership in a competitive market.[37]

With so many newspapers involved in political debate on one or both sides of issues, it was not surprising that the British government had a long history of attempting to influence the press. This was assured even more importance during the war with France in the 1790s. For the most part, regulation of the press was not seen by the government as censorship or limitation of press freedom. Instead, control was seen as a means of fighting back against the malicious tendencies of the press.[38] To influence the press was a type of defense against attacks made in the pages of newspapers. Although newspapers made significant gains in independence during the eighteenth century, they

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[36]Black, "Continuity and Change," 72.

[37]Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion*, 57-58.

[38]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 33.

were still highly susceptible to government endeavors to curtail their circulation of information and opinion. This was, in fact, the case for all printed material, not just newspapers, as the government's campaign in 1792-3 against the sale and distribution of Paine's *Rights of Man* demonstrated.

The government had a wide variety of means to influence the press. Prosecution was one such avenue, made easier because of vague legal definitions of libel in the eighteenth century. Also effective was circulation restriction. This was possible through two different techniques. First, the government directly influenced newspaper prices through the stamp duty on paper. Higher duties meant higher prices and thus potentially fewer readers, and, as an added bonus, the government received higher revenue from the extra tax. Increase in stamp duties was significant in the last two decades of the century: in 1780, the duty was one pence half penny; in 1789, Pitt raised it to two pence even; and in 1797, it reached three pence half penny.[39] In part, this increase was offset by the growing financial independence of newspapers through advertising,[40] but stamp duties, like legal prosecution, remained a viable means of applying pressure to newspapers.

The second method of restricting newspaper circulation was closely tied to the manner in which papers were distributed in the eighteenth century. Newspapers were sold by streethawkers or booksellers, newspaper shops, and coffeehouses. Delivery was also made to regular subscribers by post, particularly for distribution to the provinces.[41] It was this last means of circulating papers that provided an opportunity for government

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[39]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press,* 16-18.

[40]See Black, *English Press*, 288-289.

[41]Black, *English Press*, 100.

restriction. Clerks of the Road were responsible for franking newspapers, and controlling these underpaid postal employees meant controlling the circulation of papers. By offering monetary incentives to the post clerks, the government could delay, disrupt, or even prevent the circulation of certain newspapers, or ensure that favorable publications, particularly evening papers, were distributed after the office had closed for the night.[42] The government could also control the cost of posting the newspapers. Until 1796, this was a separate charge from the stamp duty, although the Clerks often franked government-sponsored newspapers free, an obvious disadvantage for those papers hostile to the ministry. After 1796, postage was covered by the stamp duty, but the Clerks still wielded considerable influence over what papers were sent, and when.[43] In this manner, the government, if only indirectly, could hinder or aid the distribution of specific papers, particularly to the areas outside of London.

One final means the government used to influence the press was through subsidies. Arguably, this was the most productive means of controlling the content of the printed word, since subsidization, if effective, could both curtail criticism *and* persuade writers to offer works in support of a particular position. Subsidization had a long history in Britain, particularly during the days of Walpole and in times of dynastic uncertainty.[44] Payment of the press, which included pamphleteers and cartoonists in addition to newspaper editors, was not confined to the ministry in power, either. The Opposition in Parliament was also willing to subsidize the press in return for favorable coverage. The

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[42]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 177-179; Black, *English Press*, 102-103.

[43] Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 177-178.

[44]That is, due to Jacobite scares, ministerial changes upon the accessions of George II and George III, and so on.

government, however, had better financial means of providing subsidies, and it was the main proprietor of newspapers at this time.

The benefits gained from subsidization were generally seen by the government as worth the cost. Press payments helped suppress criticism of the ministry, as the government could just as easily pay writers not to write as they could pay them to do so. Even if the newspapers did not completely abstain from government attacks, and few did, subsidies did provide incentive to publish fewer or less harsh criticisms. The government also employed a number of writers, many of whom contributed to the publications by the APLP in the 1790s. These writers were willing to compose items, often just a short piece, or "puff," in favor of ministerial policies and individuals. The government was also interested in controlling press accounts of foreign negotiations. Diplomacy was a sensitive and secretive affair, and not necessarily a news item that the ministry wanted widely circulated.[45]

Funding for subsidization came from the secret service money set aside each year by the government and managed by the Secretary of the Treasury. This money was used for pensions -- the source of the famous widespread political patronage of the eighteenth century -- and for subsidies. Parliament had been concerned enough about the amount of money being paid out through the secret service fund to pass the 1782 Act sponsored by Edmund Burke limiting the total amount of pensions and subsidies to £10,000 per year. This reflected the calls for "economical" reform prevalent in the 1780s. Under this restriction, the government still managed to offer £5,000 annually to newspapers in 1790,

[45]Black, *English Press*, 154.

along with £875 annually directly to writers.[46] This was distributed to various newspapers, some in regular receipt of funds on an annual basis, others receiving occasional subsidies based on the need for government support at that particular time.

In the 1790s, the government continued to distribute funds and patronage to many newspapers and writers. Half of the subsidies were in the form of partial, irregular funding. The other half was given regularly to a group of newspapers, the true "ministerial" press. In the first two years of the 1790s, these newspapers were the *Diary, London Evening Post, St. James Chronicle, Public Ledger, Whitehall Evening Post, Morning Herald, World, Oracle,* and the *Times.*[47] These newspapers were sporadic in their support for the government, however, offering general approval of the ministry but still maintaining independence in choosing their content. Pitt's ministry, frustrated by its inability to completely control these papers, decided to create a new paper that was more supportive of government policy: the *Sun.*[48]

It has been hard to determine precisely which individuals were most responsible for setting up the *Sun* in October 1792, and later, its companion paper, the *True Briton.* The involvement of government officials in the press was not considered appropriate for public knowledge and, as such, those responsible for securing funding were quite secretive. By most accounts, the original idea of founding a new paper came from Edmund Burke himself. Beyond Burke, in terms of the actual logistics of creating the *Sun*, a whole slate of names has emerged in connection with this newspaper. Among the

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[46]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 67-69.

[47]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 68. Aspinall's information is based on the few surviving records of secret service accounts.

[48]Werkmeister, *Newspaper History*, 118.

most likely candidates were James Bland Burges (1752-1824), the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Charles Long (1761-1838), a Secretary of the Treasury, Sir Francis Freeling (1764-1836), a Post Office official, and George Rose (1744-1818), another Secretary of the Treasury. All of these individuals were closely associated with Pitt, and the positions of Rose and Long in the Treasury, the source of secret service funding, would have made subsidies that much easier to come by. Much more certain was the fact that the government officials responsible for the founding of the *Sun* had in their midst a group of paid writers, many of them also members of the government, a printer, Buchanan Millan, who had formerly printed the *Oracle*, and an editor, John Heriot (1760-1833), willing to undertake the endeavor.[49]

Heriot, a former military man, had experience as a novel writer and a newspaper contributor, having worked for the *Oracle* and the *World* before editing the *Sun*. A strong ministerial supporter, he was also a paid writer for the government from 1789 onwards, receiving £100 a year from the secret service fund.[50] Later, in 1806, he even received a commissionership in the Lottery Office.[51] As the editor of the *Sun*, he enjoyed priority of access to government information, something not shared by all members of the press, through his connections with Evan Nepean (1761-1822), the Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs.[52] This was a bonus at a time when newspapers had such limited means of obtaining information.

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[49]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 78-79; Werkmeister, *Newspaper History*, 118-119.

[50]Werkmeister, *Newspaper History*, 28-29.

[51]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 176n.

[52]Werkmeister, *Newspaper History*, 448.

Heriot also edited the *True Briton*, founded only a few months later in January of 1793. The *Sun* was an afternoon daily, and the *True Briton* was designed to be a morning counterpart. The *True Briton* was printed in the shop that had formerly been the home of the *Argus*, an opposition paper seized by the government while its editor was prosecuted for libel. Like the *Sun,* the *True Briton* was a government affair created by many of the same individuals.[53] From 1793 onward, then, the government had two publications strongly devoted to its policies.

It has not been clear how much money was given to subsidize the *Sun* and the *True Briton.* Heriot himself denied receiving funding, although much evidence has been found to the contrary. Heriot's denial was most likely a reflection of the stigma attached to sponsorship (his newspapers were often accused of receiving money), and not necessarily of the real situation. Indeed, records have indicated that Heriot received a total of £232 14 s. 9 d. between December 1792 and March 1793 for various advertisements and writings.[54] Funding surely continued after these dates, both for the newspapers themselves and certainly for their individual writers, whether through pensions or subsidies.

From the beginning, the *Sun* and the *True Briton* were strongly identified with the defense of the Constitution being waged in the 1790s. The usefulness of the papers was first demonstrated in November of 1792 when, at the suggestion of Nepean, Heriot offered the use of his pages for advertising on behalf of the APLP. This may have been

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[53]Werkmeister, *Newspaper History*, 143, 171.

[54]see Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, 165, and R.R. Dozier, *Ministerial Efforts to Combat Revolutionary Propaganda, 1789-1793* (Ph.D. diss, University of California, Berkeley, 1969), 200.

one of the reasons for the secret service payments in December of that year. Copies of the newspapers were also sent to the editors of provincial publications free of charge in return for printing certain excerpts in their own papers.[55] In London, meanwhile, circulation was strong for the *Sun* and *True Briton* as they joined the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* in posting the highest sales numbers.[56] These two newspapers lasted well into the nineteenth century, with the *True Briton* being absorbed into another paper in the early 1800s and the *Sun* lasting into the 1820s.

By 1797, however, a few supporters of the ministry were still unsatisfied with the defense of the government in the press. Even the *Sun* and the *True Briton* were not immune from attacks as Heriot was in occasional conflict with the Home Office over his access to information, particularly of the sensitive diplomatic kind, and many also complained about the lack of accuracy in the two papers.[57] The young George Canning (1770-1827), a devotee of Pitt and Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, was particularly concerned with the content of the *Sun*, and he laid plans for the *Anti-Jacobin*, a weekly publication with the explicit purpose of defending the ministry and attacking the opposition press.[58]

As the leader of the endeavor, Canning was given a chance to show his strong support for the Pitt ministry. Originally, Canning had been affiliated with Charles James

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[55]Brown, *The French Revolution in English History*, 85.

[56]Dozier, *Ministerial Efforts*, 106. Exact figures are difficult to find for the period. Dozier offers this statement based on contemporary anecdotal evidence comparing the circulation of the three papers.

[57]Aspinall, *Politics and the Press,*185-186, Werkmeister, *Newspaper History*, 172, 448.

[58]Jennifer Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 275.

Fox, Richard Sheridan, and the more reform-oriented members of the Whigs. With the debate over the Revolution, however, Canning became a stalwart proponent of the ministry and, in particular, Pitt, who gave him his start in Parliament in 1793 and his position at the Foreign Office in 1795.[59] He was joined by many of his friends in the government, particularly in the Foreign Office, who contributed their writing to *Anti-Jacobin*. Among the politicians associated with support for the project was Charles Long, the head of the Treasury who had been involved in the founding of the *Sun* five years earlier.[60] Even Pitt may have contributed a few articles in support of his own fiscal policies. Under this core of talented officials gathered to produce the weekly publication, the *Anti-Jacobin* was printed on the very same presses used for the *Sun*.[61]

The editor chosen for the weekly was William Gifford (1756-1826), a strongly anti-Jacobin writer who was best known for his scathing attacks on the "Della Cruscan" poets in his two works, *Baviad* (1791) and *Maeviad* (1795). These poets, very popular in the 1780s and 1790s, were associated with the same type of emotions that had created the French Revolution.[62] Consequently, they were a prime target for a satirist such as Gifford. Canning drafted him in 1797, and he remained the editor for the duration of the weekly *Anti-Jacobin*'s short existence.

The *Anti-Jacobin*, too, was very popular right away. According to its own

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[59]Wendy Hinde, *George Canning* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 22-44.

[60]Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 21.

[61]Hinde, *Canning*, 58, 63.

[62]Roy Benjamin Clark, *William Gifford: Tory Satirist, Critic, and Editor* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 36-37.

figures, it had a readership of 50,000 people and weekly sales of 2500 copies.[63] Its writers continued to circulate it for the duration of the Parliamentary session between November 1797 and July 1798, having promised in its prospectus to continue only for this duration. Its popularity was strong enough that its concept was taken up again in 1798 in magazine form as the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* under a new editor and a permanent staff of writers devoted to fighting, as always, the influence of Jacobins. This publication lasted into the 1820s.[64]

The government had a handful of publications, then, spanning the first phase of the war between 1793 and 1798, upon which it exerted a strong influence both directly and indirectly. With support from the ministry and a group of writers committed to the government, the *Sun*, the *True Briton*, and the *Anti-Jacobin* gave voice to the ideas long held to be vital to the defense of the British system. Within their pages were scathing attacks on the ideas of the Revolution, assaults on those in favor of Jacobinism in Britain, censures of Opposition politicians, and significant argumentation in favor of the British Constitution. The method by which this defense was undertaken involved a combination of language and discourse put forward by the three newspapers.

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[63]Emsley, *British Society*, 66.

[64]For information on the *Review*, particularly its contributors, see de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins*.

2

Defending the Constitution

Among the many forms of loyalist support, the government relied on the *Sun*, the *True Briton*, and later, the *Anti-Jacobin* as three publications most specifically devoted to this cause. The newspapers themselves avowed that this loyalist defense was their primary purpose. The *Sun,* in a reflection published one year after its founding, claimed:

> The history of newspapers cannot furnish an example of such a rapid establishment as the *Sun* has experienced . . . Of our Political Principles it is, we trust, unnecessary for us, at the present time, to make either a profession or a boast. Enlisted under the Banners of the British Constitution, to support that shall be the unceasing object of our vigilance and our duty -- We shall not relax in our exertions to preserve it alike from the rude assaults of Foreign Foes, and the still more dangerous designs of specious but insidious speculators.[1]

The *Anti-Jacobin*, in the prospectus launching it in November, 1797, likewise asserted:

> Of all these [radical ideas] and the like principles, -- in one word, of JACOBINISM in all its shapes, and in all its degrees, political and moral, public and private, whether as it openly threatens the subversion of states, or gradually saps the foundations of domestic happiness, we are the avowed, determined, and irreconcilable enemies.

And perhaps most directly of all, the *True Briton* used as its front-page motto *Nolumus Leges Angliae Mutari* – "We Refuse to Change the Laws of England." Clearly, then, these papers had the primary purpose of furthering the loyalist cause.

The means by which these newspapers approached this task involved several different motifs discernible in the form, content, and language of the publications. Above all, the contributors relied on the image of the British Constitution as the protector of Britons and the cause to defend. As a contrast, these newspapers also offered the vision of the "Jacobin," the perceived threat unleashed by the French Revolution that

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[1]*Sun*, 1 October 1793.

precipitated a defense of the Constitution. Given these diverging choices -- the Constitution versus Jacobinism -- the obvious concern became the potential for a schism in Britain between adherents of the Constitution and subversives, labeled "English Jacobins," who had been seduced by radicalism and who were prepared to undermine the British system. Consequently, much effort was devoted within the pages of these newspapers to uncovering signs of this breakdown and describing the dangers it created. Finally, as a tool to fight off this potential calamity, these loyalist publications sought a consensus among Britons, united behind the Constitution, that crossed lines of class, gender, and nation, yet still remained within the confines of traditional social and political roles.

Throughout these newspapers, the vision of the Constitution appeared most often as the focus of loyalty and the source of British superiority. More so than the Church, the Parliament, or even the King, the Constitution appeared as the image used to justify loyalty. The reason for this lay in the perception held by most Britons towards the Constitution, an attitude that corresponded closely with the view held by Burke, Paley, Blackstone, and numerous other loyalists stretching as far back as the late seventeenth century. The descriptive definition of the word "Constitution" itself, the paternal nature of the Constitution as a guarantor of society, common law, and religion, and, ultimately, the balance and wisdom seen in the British system -- all contributed to the attractiveness of the Constitution as a focus for loyalty. Moreover, since the Constitution encompassed the King, the Church, and the Parliament, support of the former meant loyalty to all three of the latter. In other words, loyalty to the Constitution was synonymous with fidelity to the hierarchy of society and the institutions that protected it.

The language used in the newspapers to describe the Constitution and urge support for the British system confirmed the continuity of eighteenth-century loyalist thought. As in the works of Paley and Blackstone, the Constitution was described as the perfect protection of a traditional hierarchy as created by social and religious laws. "An Old Englishman" wrote in to point out that "our Constitution answers the best purposes which social nature is capable of producing."[2] Another letter to the editor compared faith in the Constitution to faith in God, and adding that "the intricacies of it [the Constitution] he may not understand; it is a piece of mechanism, fearfull complex and delicate, and must not be trifled with," a statement strongly reminiscent of both the "old mansion" metaphor used by Paley to describe the irregularities of the British system and the caution against unnecessary reform urged by Burke. The contributor then concluded by offering the classic mixed government argument in language so reminiscent of eighteenth-century Constitutionalism that it deserves quotation at length:

> The observance of the balance of Government is fully guaranteed to us. The true Whig Principles of this Country secure us from any undue influence of the Monarchical power . . . We are not liable to the convulsions which attended the annual election of the Supreme Magistrate at Rome -- the hereditary descent of our Crown preserves us from them. We cannot be oppressed by the despotic tyranny of absolute monarchy, nor by the anarchy of lawless democracy . . . the House of Peers preserves us from them. We are not subject to the loss of the most important and beneficial measures, by the will of any one factious demagogue, nor by a reference of them to a wrong headed, ungovernable populace . . . the decision by majority of voices in the House of Commons preserves us from them. Such are the great principles, such the superior advantages of the British Constitution.[3]

Such language was typical of the arguments being used in these newspapers, demonstrating the lasting influence of Whig ideals and scholars such as Blackstone and

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[2]*Sun*, 25 May 1795.

[3]*Sun*, 20 March 1793.

Paley.

The language used in these papers to defend the Constitutional *status quo* was occasionally presented through unusual sources. This was most evident in November of 1796 when the *Sun* reprinted George Washington's Farewell Address in its entirety. The language used by Washington in the address, despite the dissimilar context in which he was making his arguments, was surprisingly similar to that being offered by the British loyalists.[4] Washington warned:

> Towards the preservation of your Government, and the permanency of your present happy State, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be, to effect, in the forms of the Constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix true character of Governments as of other human institutions -- that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing Constitution of a Country.[5]

That the American Constitution – in contrast to the British Constitution – was a written document was overshadowed by Washington's use of the same language offered by British loyalists. The words of Washington proved equally applicable to Burkean prescription and the British concept of the Constitution.

Such arguments reinforced the notion of perfection in the British system, while the language recalled the reasoning of some of the most popular proponents of the government: Blackstone, Paley, and Burke. Yet at the same time, these contentions were

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[4]The modern irony of publishing the words of the military commander responsible for the loss of the American Colonies as a means of urging loyalty was not applicable here. At this time, Washington was seen as an admirable leader of the fledgling American nation and enjoyed considerable popularity among many Britons.

[5]*Sun*, 9 November 1796.

reinforced by the contrasting manner in which the adherents of French radicalism were portrayed. Even the term most often used to describe these perceived enemies, "Jacobins," would have been strongly connected in the minds of most Britons with regicide, fanaticism, and violence, all elements alien to the ideals of the Constitution.

The actual dangers of Jacobinism were clearly spelled out. These publications reminded readers of the hostility shown by Jacobins to religion, for instance. In part, this was based on the attack on the clergy during the French Revolution embodied in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, an act condemned by many commentators and particularly singled out by Burke in *Reflections*. However, there was also an implicit atheism in the idea of Revolution itself since it contradicted the belief held by many Britons that government support was a religious duty. Faith in the Constitution, after all, meant faith in God, and breaking this contract was atheism. As one issue of the *Sun* asked rhetorically, "If religion is dear to us, what compact can we form with men who have polluted it in all manner of base ways, and who daily riot in the blood of its innocent pastors?"[6] At a time when an emerging Evangelical movement and Methodism were reinforcing the power of religion, such claims carried heavy weight. There was little room for compromise on this issue: one writer claimed that indifference to atheists was as bad as atheism itself.[7]

The violence of the Revolution was also startling, and these newspapers were quick to remind readers of the events in France. Updates on Jacobin affairs were offered in most issues, but one image in particular was useful as a reminder of the violence of the

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[6]*Sun*, 25 December 1793.

[7]*Anti-Jacobin,* 15 January 1798.

revolutionaries: the guillotine. A poem in the *Anti-Jacobin* entitled "La Sainte Guillotine" warned:

> Two Heads, says our Proverb, are better than One,
> But the Jacobin choice is for Five Heads or none.
> By Directories only can Liberty thrive,
> Then down with the One, Boys! and up with the Five![8]

The full shock came in early 1793 with the execution of Louis XVI by revolutionaries. The Bourbons had commanded little respect in the heyday of absolutism prior to the Revolution, but execution of a monarch, no matter how tyrannical, was considered unacceptable.[9] Both the *Sun* and *True Briton* gave extensive coverage to the event, and continued to lament the treatment of the fallen monarch for months afterwards. Yet this event could not compare with the tragedy of Marie Antoinette. Coverage of her execution in October, 1793 was even more extensive, with fully published reports of her trial and death. The headline introducing the news, "Murder of the Queen of France," made the sentiments of the papers clear. At issue was gender. In much the same vein as the condemnation by Burke of the treatment of the Queen at Versailles in the early months of the Revolution, the execution of a female sovereign gave undeniable proof of the barbarism of the Jacobins.[10]

The contrast between the stability and civility of the British under the Constitution

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[8]*Anti-Jacobin*, 4 December 1797. Few eighteenth-century newspapers provided an author for their works (see commentary in C. Brooks, "John Reeves and his Correspondents: A Contribution to the Study of British Loyalism" in *Apres 89: La Révolution Modèle ou Repoussoir* ed. L. Domergue and G. Lamoine (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Miraeil, 1991), 56-60.), but it is known that George Canning contributed much of the poetry to the *Anti-Jacobin*. This may have been one of his contributions.

[9] Much of eighteenth-century loyalist political thought involved a self-imposed amnesia concerning the execution of Charles I over a century before.

[10]See the discussion of gender, Burke, and Marie Antoinette in Colley, *Britons*, 252-256.

and the horrors of the Jacobins was stark enough, but what truly made the matter serious was the potential spread of republican ideals outside of France. The *Sun* announced in early 1794 that the French Jacobins "continued to asperse the British Constitution and Government," and that the "phillipics against the English Constitution" were being translated into English in order to "spread the principles of Republicanism on the banks of the Thames."[11] Later, in 1796-1798, the possibilities of invasion added a tangible military threat to this jeopardy. The dangers of the foreign enemy, the Jacobins, provided a stark contrast with the moderation of the Constitution, making a strong case against radicalism.

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Few Britons believed, however, that the primary threat came from Jacobins invading British soil and overthrowing the government. The real potential for ruin came from a source far more dark and seditious: the "English Jacobin." Here, the term used most often by the newspapers to describe those believed to have espoused the principles of the Revolution involved an even deeper meaning. While a Jacobin spread violence and republicanism, the phrase "English Jacobin" insinuated not just an English version of the French fanatics, but a traitor. English Jacobinism signaled a schism between supporters of the Constitution and the social and political hierarchy that it represented. As one writer stated:

> The French Jacobin, amidst animosity, anarchy and murder, at home, and while he carries desolation, poverty and death in to other Nations, still keeps in view the aggrandizement of France, and the depression of every other Kingdom. The nature and habits of the English Jacobin are totally opposite. He appears to have a rooted antipathy to his Native Land; but to the despotic Anarchy of France his

[11]*Sun*, 25 January 1794.

> Love is ardent and sincere, and his exertions in favour of that despotic Anarchy are boundless and unceasing![12]

As if this treachery was not enough, there was also the threat that English Jacobinism would spread beyond a small cadre of radicals. Many articles were thus devoted to convincing readers of this danger, announcing the presence of English Jacobinism when detected, and, ultimately, attempting to dissuade its audience from becoming English Jacobins themselves.

The question of readership was thus a major concern. Given the price of the daily *Sun* and the *True Briton*, four pence in 1793 rising to six pence by 1797, and the price of the weekly *Anti-Jacobin*, also six pence, these publications were only directly accessible to upper- and some middle-class Britons. Moreover, the content of the newspapers, with their advertisements for consumer goods such as medicines and cosmetic items, for upcoming theatrical events, and for high-priced pamphlets, hinted strongly at a readership of some financial means.[13] The relative expense of the newspaper was compounded by the choice of language. Occasional poetry submitted in Latin and not the vernacular, along with numerous references to outside historical and literary works assumed a certain level of education among readers not normally attainable among lower-class Britons. Yet the awareness of a lower-class audience, however small, must have been conscious among proprietors of these publications, given the widespread practice of reading papers out loud in reading-rooms and the distribution of newspapers by the government itself for free.

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[12]*Anti-Jacobin*, 18 December 1797.

[13]Advertisements for new pamphlets by loyalist writers such as Burke, Arthur Young, and John Bowles were most prevalent, of course.

Class was a strong concern for these publications, not only because writers spoke for a specific social hierarchy as the defenders of the Constitution, but also because interactions among classes were closely related to the spread of Jacobinism. The containment of English Jacobinism was necessary at all levels of society, but the nature of the threat posed by radicalism differed depending on rank. Among the lower orders, usually delineated by the newspapers as the "poorer class" or the "lower ranks," there was clearly a potential for violence. The poorer Britons, as had the poorer French during the Revolution, became the "mob" or "banditti" when infected with Jacobinism, progenitors of physical destruction.[14] They became Burke's infamous "swinish multitude." Among the upper and middle ranks, however, the danger was two-fold. They might, on rare occasions, be the cause for direct attacks on the Constitution, but even more serious was the possibility of the lower ranks being led to English Jacobinism by their social superiors. In other words, schism at the top of the hierarchy could filter down into the lower ranks, spreading radical ideals and providing real danger to the British social and political fabric. This was particularly serious at time when dissent over the American Revolution, movements for Parliamentary reform, and the Wilkes Affairs had created a perceived compromise in the solidarity of the governing classes.

Everywhere, the language and arguments used by these publications reinforced this notion. According to the contributors, signs of English Jacobinism were evident among the highest echelons of the Whig Party, particularly in the form of the Whig Club, the Friends of the People, and in the actions of Charles James Fox. The support given by the Club to the French and the resistance by Fox and the Opposition to the war effort was

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[14]*True Briton*, 25 Janurary 1797.

seen as a sign of the spread of English Jacobinism among the highest political ranks. Consequently, these Whigs were condemned consistently as seditious individuals of the most vile sort. The *Sun* noted that "if report may be trusted, there has existed a Correspondence between some distinguished Members of the Party and some of the Jacobins abroad," a serious charge during wartime when such communication was outright treason.[15]

When Grey proposed his Reform Bill on two occasions in the 1790s, it received a barrage of opposition in the *Sun* and *True Briton*. On the most obvious level, reform was opposed on the basis of the perfect nature of the Constitution, a system that required no modification. As one of the more extreme declamatory statements asserted:

> If Mr.Grey's wild system of Parliamentary Reform goes to introduce personal representation, the Constitution of this Country would be wholly at an end. If personal representation has, in the short period of four years, given the Government of France into the hands of the Mob, with two Legislative Bodies in succession most completely devoid of property; and, if the consequence has been the destruction of property, and delivery of its possessors to be butchered or banished, we are surely justified in asserting, that THE EXPERIMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATION HAS BEEN MADE AND TOTALLY FAILED.[16]

This passage revealed the traditional fear of democratic representation, along with a tendency to deliberately distort the intentions of Grey's proposals, but there was also a darker, more subtle declaration being made here as well: by espousing Grey's Bill, members of the Whig polity -- the supposed leaders of Britain itself -- had been infected with English Jacobinism. This was a much more serious situation. A letter submitted by "Britannicus" and addressed to Charles Grey noted the gravity of the times given the

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[15]*Sun*, 21 January 1794.

[16]*Sun*, 30 March 1793.

Revolution and the war and scolded the politician for his failure to maintain parliamentary unity:

> There is, perhaps, Sir, no one question that could be submitted to Parliamentary investigation at this eventful period, more likely to promote this dangerous disunion, than that which relates to a Reform in the system of Representation.[17]

The message was that a break among the Whig ranks signified the presence of English Jacobinism, a prelude to Constitutional destruction. Another short segment made this connection more explicit:

> . . . for men to tell us . . . that they are not Jacobins, but moderate men, wishing Reform, is as impudent as it would be for a thief to say that he is not an assassin, because he only held a candle while another cut my throat.[18]

English Jacobinism had been detected, then, within the Whig Party itself, a sure sign of the far- reaching influence of radicalism.

Another event brought similar reactions in these loyalist publications. In January of 1798, at a celebration for the birthday of Charles James Fox, the Duke of Norfolk offered a toast to "Our Sovereign, the Majesty of the People." The toast caused an uproar with its hints at an elective monarchy by choice of the people, so reminiscent of arguments by Dr. Price and by the French Revolutionaries. Norfolk lost his position as the Lord Lieutenant of West Riding; in May, Fox repeated the toast and was nearly prosecuted.[19] The account of the celebration given by the *Anti-Jacobin* described a drunken gathering in which a pick-pocket managed to make his rounds during the event and Fox sang an absurd tune set to an English drinking song and an inebriated Captain

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[17]*True Briton*, 9 June 1797

[18]*Sun*, 5 April, 1793.

[19]Emsley, *British Society*, 67.

Morris, a paper cap placed on his head unbeknownst to him, fell asleep. The account continued with Norfolk toasting the King, before which "a Counsellor attempted to sing 'Paddy Whack' but was soon silenced, on account of his stupid perversion of the words, and his bad voice."[20] The reason for the furor was a similar concern over the break of the Whig ranks on the issue of the Revolution and the war and the implication that Jacobinism was present at the highest levels of government. The scene in which the *Anti-Jacobin* insisted such a toast had to have occurred, a drunken celebration, provided both an attack on the personal character of those involved (Fox, for instance, was notorious for his drinking excesses), but it also hinted at a behavior that resulted from English Jacobinism itself. Radicalism thus bred intemperance and foolish conduct.

English Jacobinism among the Whigs was certainly a danger, but another concern addressed by these publications was the possibility of such radicalism spreading both outside of the political sphere and down the social hierarchy. Radicals were believed to be everywhere seeking followers, particularly by means of the press. Called by the loyalists the "Jacobin Press," these publications included most newspapers not offering an explicitly pro-government stance, specifically those sympathetic to the French and opposed to the war. The most notorious, according to the *Anti-Jacobin*, whose primary purpose was to expose these papers as seditious, were the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Courier*. In issue after issue, the *Anti-Jacobin* contributors corrected what they saw as "misrepresentations," "lies," and "mistakes" in the pages of these papers. An early issue stated directly that the "Jacobin Press" based its information

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[20]*Anti-Jacobin*, 29 January 1798.

on faulty sources and outright lies.[21] His biographer has noted that William Gifford was primarily responsible for this part of the publication.[22] To further blacken the reputation of these publications, the *Anti-Jacobin* supported allegations that the French Directory paid one of the Jacobin newspapers in the city,[23] and followed this up by attacking the *Morning Chronicle* for accusing "Ministerial Writers" of "labouring for hire":

> Whether those who write in defence of Religion, Property, and Laws of their Country, do it for hire or not, we cannot take upon us to say; this however, we hesitate not to affirm (since we have it from one of their Pay-masters) that some of the Jacobin Editors (we do not pretend to say which), 'write for hire,' and for FRENCH hire -- not in defence of the Religion, &c. of their country, but of everything hostile to it; of Atheism, Anarchy, and Blood.[24]

These attacks reflected a concern among the loyalists that these publications might convince their readers to espouse ideas hostile to the Constitution, extending radicalism beyond the political arena and into the populace at large.

An even greater concern was the specific spread of English Jacobinism down to the poorer class in society. The most aggravating example of this for the loyalists was to be found in the writings of Thomas Paine. Of all the pro-Revolutionary pamphleteers of the time, Paine, referred to in the *Sun* on occasion as "the devil" and "refuse," was vilified the most. His *Rights of Man*, with its attacks on the monarchy, was certainly the most radical of all British writing of the time, but this was not the primary concern. The greater danger was his popularity among the lower orders of society, evident in the high sales numbers of his writings. The poorer classes were seen as easily led by fanatics, and

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[21]*Anti-Jacobin,* 27 November 1797.

[22]R.B. Clark, *William Gifford*, 97.

[23]*Anti-Jacobin,* 12 March 1798.

[24]*Anti-Jacobin*, 19 March 1798.

Paine, with his levelling ideas and support for the ideal of democratic government, was a dangerous man to have among the British ranks. The wide circulation of *Rights of Man* served as proof of the dangerous popularity of English Jacobins in Britain.

But Paine was not the only one perceived as posing a threat by stirring up the lower orders to insurrection. Other sources were societies such as the LCS and SCI in Britain. The language most often used to describe these institutions, "seditious societies" or "treasonous associations," would have immediately signaled to the reader the evil intention of their members. To the eighteenth-century Briton, a society or association was as likely to conjure up images of secret, factious groups with conspiratorial designs as any other vision. This fear was so strong that some historians have noted that loyalists even remained suspicious of the APLP, the pro-government association, because of this prejudice against societies.[25] Naturally, the descriptions of the designs of the LCS and other societies by the *Sun*, *True Briton*, and *Anti-Jacobin* did little to improve their reputation.

To the loyalist publications, societies such as the LCS were composed of misled laborers and other elements of the lower ranks controlled by a small group of renegade Britons devoted to the spread of radicalism and the downfall of the Constitution. In 1794, at the time of the arrest of LCS secretary Thomas Hardy, an event that sparked extensive coverage in the *Sun* and *True Briton*, an article was published describing Hardy and his belongings:

> Amongst Mr. Hardy's papers is an alphabetical book, dividing London into Districts, with the names of the persons in each parish, who are members of the Corresponding Society. In another book, he kept the receipts of the different persons to support this society. Hardy, in person, is a tall man; much marked in the face with the small-pox; his manners low and vulgar, and in dress and habit

[25] See C. Brooks, "John Reeves and his Correspondents," 54-55.

quite a *Sans Culotte.*[26]

Two elements of this excerpt were indicative of the concerns of the loyalists. First there was the geographically widespread nature of support for the LCS. Readers of the *Sun* were being warned that a member of their own community could quite easily be an English Jacobin. Caution was thus in order. Second, there is the obvious concern over the background of Hardy. He was a *sans culotte*, that is, a Jacobin of the English variety, but he was also "low and vulgar" in his manners, meaning he was of low rank.

The truly shocking element, however, was the combination of his low rank with his political involvement. Hardy was, as a letter to the editor published in *True Briton* added, "not only secretary to one of these clubs, and a maker of boots, but wishes also to be regarded as a mender of Constitutions."[27] The pun on the word "mend" in the phrase was meant to signal to readers the absurdity of Hardy's position. As a cobbler and a member of the lower ranks, he was to be considered ill-suited for political concerns. In attempting to reform the Constitution, Hardy was leaving his traditional social rank, a sure sign of English Jacobinism. This same type of language was also used to describe the members of the LCS in general. The *Sun* asserted:

> The persons who have formed the bulk of the Seditious Meetings (which, it is to be hoped, are now put a stop to), have been in general the journeymen of carpenters, bricklayers, taylors, shoemakers, and other tradesmen and artificers, whose wages have of late years been so much advanced, that an ordinary workman may, in three days, earn sufficient to enable to spend the other four in an ale-house, to the neglect of his family, while, inspired by the fumes of gin or porter, he is striving to repair, mend, or cobble the Constitution, instead of the houses, cloathes, or shoes of those who stand in need of his assistance.[28]

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[26]*Sun*, 13 May 1794.

[27]*True Briton*, 11 July 1794.

[28]*Sun*, 15 January 1796.

Accusation of laziness and intemperance leveled at laborers was not new, but the context of this statement was. Like the drunkenness of Fox and the Duke of Norfolk, English Jacobinism signaled a type of excess and ill-directed intention that was sure to harm the Constitution. Moreover, a clear sign of the presence of English Jacobinism was the appearance of societies populated not by conscientious member of the upper ranks, but misdirected workers neglecting their proper social station.

Jacobin ideas, according to the loyalists, also came from sources beyond the societies. These loyalist publications had difficulty believing that even Hardy was acting on his own: one report argued that Hardy had been "seduced and deluded to become secretary to a society," having been led to believe that the intent of the LCS was "that of effecting a Reform only in the Representation of the People," not the true designs, "conspiring to bring about a total destruction of the monarchy" and the creation of a "state of Anarchy." The newspapers also warned against potential corruption at the hands of Sunday and charity schools, eighteenth-century creations responsible for wider literacy and indoctrination of religious, particularly Methodist, tenets in the middle and lower orders. One of the clearest examples of this concern was evident in the publication of an excerpt from Arthur Young's *The Example of France, A Warning to Britain* (1793). Young had stated:

> Where the licentiousness of the press is in any degree allowed, the general instruction of the lower classes must become the seed of revolt, and it is for this reason that the Friends of Reform, and zealous admirers of French Equality, are strenuous for Sunday and Charity Schools. The Gentlemen who consider Paine as a conspicuous friend of mankind, and an admirable Writer, would have a system of National Education established, in which every person may become informed what are the rights of a Citizen.[29]

[29]*Sun*, 5 April 1793.

This passage demonstrated explicitly the original concern held by the loyalists for the breakdown of the Whig coalition. The Friends of Reform, in espousing Paine and English Jacobinism, threatened to lead the lower ranks astray by means of education. Sunday and charity schools, suspicious inventions precisely because they targeted lower class Britons, were a logical choice for spreading radicalism, and the fact that these schools would teach the poor to become "Citizens" made the link to the French experience more direct.

In addition to the members of the radical Whig Club, with or without a seditious system of education, the loyalist newspapers believed other means were responsible for the misdirection of the lower classes. Conversion of the lower class into radicals was also possible, according to the loyalists, by the circulation and signing of petitions, often with dubious consent on the part of the victims. Numerous articles and letters were published decrying the collecting of signatures by foul means, particularly among the lower ranks. A letter from James Hadow of Bedfordshire outlined the situation:

> Two men have been riding about in these retired, industrious, and well-affected Parishes, soliciting Signatures (if so they may be called), to a Petition for Peace. They attempt no one above the class of day-labourers; and them they address in the barns, the fields and roads, with these questions, which, God knows, we may all answer, as they very innocently do, in the affirmative.[30]

The belief was that English Jacobin petition collectors were able to build their strength by targeting the lower ranks. Similar letters were also presented from Birmingham, a city also heavily populated by laborers, and Glasgow.[31] In each case, the writer noted that the poorer ranks were being targeted, and that they had in most cases been "seduced" into

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[30]*Sun*, 1 January 1796.

[31]*Sun*, 13 May 1793 and 16 August 1793.

signing. Clearly, the loyalists perceived that the lower orders were being led by their social superiors to embrace radicalism.

English Jacobinism was also spread by the speeches given by radicals at various meetings all around the country. "Delegates," claimed one article, "are sent to different parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of making converts . . . one of their delegates lately boasted, that he could bring 40,000 miners to their support; and another, deputed to Newcastle, flatters himself with similar success among the Colliers."[32] The *Sun* described one such event in which John Thelwall, another LCS member, addressed an audience:

> The third [orator] was Citizen Thelwall, who deceived the poor deluded mortals that sacrificed the earning of a day to listen to his eloquence, by a string of the most infamous falsehoods that ever issued from the lips of man.[33]

Once again, the concern was over the poor being misled. Rather than remaining at their work -- maintaining, that is, their traditional social role -- laborers were sacrificing their livelihood at the urging of an English Jacobin orator. Easily manipulated, the members of the poorer classes were thus molded into radicals themselves at such meetings.

The *Anti-Jacobin* described the danger of these orators in greater detail. Two letters, in all likelihood concocted by Canning and his staff of writers, from "Samuel Shallow" and "Letitia Sourby" provided the forum for this description of the evil potentials of radicalism. Samuel claimed to be the son of a shoemaker living "in a small town in Warwickshire," part of a "hard-working" family that also employed his mother in his father's business. One night, Samuel's father was unwittingly exposed to a speech by

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[32]*Sun*, 23 November 1795.

[33]*Sun*, 13 November 1795.

a "Citizen Rigshaw, a Member of the Corresponding Society," while delivering his shoes to a local pub. Having heard the orator, the father became a heavy drinker, fell behind in his work, ceased attending church, and began spouting polemics on the virtues of liberty, equality, and even divorce. Only when a local Justice of the Peace, a "Gentleman," stepped in was Citizen Rigshaw "put in gaol for robbing his Landlord's Hen-roost" and Samuel's father returned to his senses.[34]

Letitia Sourby related a similar story.[35] Her father, a "manufacturer in the Calico line," attended a speech on reform, only to return with a newfound interest in liberty and equality:

> . . . to return to my Father -- who is now always reading Books and Pamphlets that seem quite wicked and immoral to my mind and my poor Mother's; whom it vexes sadly to hear my Father talk before company, that Marriage is good for nothing, and ought to be free to be broken by either party at will . . . He used to be compassionate to the Poor, and to Beggars even -- but now he drives the latter from his door, saying, if they are oppressed, why do not they right themselves? He used to go to Church too, regularly every Sunday -- but of late he has left it off entirely, though professing at the same time to be more religious than ever, and to adore the Supreme Being in his Works . . .

There was the same breakdown of social traditions in both stories, with the attendant degradation of marriage and religious institutions. To make matters worse, Letitia's father chased off her fiancee, "a match every way suitable in situation," because of his intent to fight in the war for his country. She concluded by recalling the scene the previous month at the christening of her new baby brother, a controversial event because of the name chosen by her father for the child: "Buonoparte Sourby."

The message of these stories was clear. In both, the idyllic laboring family,

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[34]*Anti-Jacobin*, 9 April 1798.

[35]*Anti-Jacobin*, 18 December 1797.

secure and industrious in its traditional small-town social role, was led astray by the outside agitator, a visiting seditious society member addressed by the Jacobin title "citizen." Drunkeness, atheism, laziness, and the degradation of marriage set in to ruin the family. In Samuel's case, the benevolent upper-class gentleman, presumably untainted himself by the attraction of English Jacobinism, stepped in to right the situation and restored the traditional way of life. Samuel even concluded by offering his story as a warning to others. In the more unfortunate situation of Letitia, no antidote for her father's radicalism was in sight; even one of her brothers became caught up in the ideas of her father. All she could do was remind the editors of the *Anti-Jacobin* that Jacobinism threatened to "disturb Domestic Felicity and Comfort as much as it does Kingdom and Empires." These stories were not unlike those being offered at the time by Hannah More in her work, *Cheap Repository Tracts*. They targeted the populace at large using anecdotal arguments and stories with simple and accessible moral lessons.

This discussion has thus far failed to mention one last element in the schism caused by English Jacobinism: the middle ranks. Loyalists were clearly worried about radicalism among the upper ranks and lower ranks, as these excerpts showed; however, Jacobinism was also detected by these newspapers in the middle class, largely urban professionals, merchants, and rural gentry of modest earnings. That the loyalists were specifically concerned with the middle class has not been agreed upon by all historians. Dror Wahrman, who has done an extensive study on the presence of what he calls "middle-class language," has argued that there were few examples in loyalist literature that called for a "middle class idiom" in supporting the government.[36] While it was true

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[36]Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representations of Class in Britain, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103.

that these three newspapers virtually never used the term "middle ranks,"[37] the middle classes were not left out. There was an implied call, though more rare, for middle class loyalism noticeable in these papers in the form of criticisms directed against particular groups associated with a ranking between the upper and lower classes. This was important given the upper- and middle-class "format" of these papers created by price and content; it was vital that these publications address those middle-class readers who, in all probability, made up a significant segment of their readership. English Jacobinism among the middle ranks was thus shown to be equally dangerous to the Constitution as it was among the upper and lower.

Two examples best illustrate this concern. One was a letter to the editor from "Verax" applauding the recent support for the war in various towns in which rich and poor alike contributed to the support of *émigrés* arriving from France. Conspicuously absent, he noted, was aid from wealthy English "Presbyterian Dissenters," a group that was generally both middle class and anti-war at this time.[38] These individuals, he complained, only contributed to "the printing and propagation of mischievous doctrines."[39] English Jacobinism was thus present among this group of Britons through their opposition to the war and through their willingness to spread their opinions outside their ranks, possibly to the lower orders. By targeting a specific "middle-class" group for criticism, members of the middle ranks were included in the discussion of the harmful

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[37]I have found only one instance of the use of this term in these newspapers. For the complete discussion by Wahrman on loyalist attitude toward middle class support, see pp. 96-107.

[38]J.E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England, 1793-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 4-29.

[39]*Sun*, 20 April 1793.

effects of war opposition and radicalism

Another essentially middle-class member singled out for criticism was the lawyer, particularly the "attorney." These professionals were the equivalent of the modern clerical lawyer, occupied largely as executors of wills and other lesser tasks. Attorneys had a bad reputation at this time anyway, but the French Revolution and the involvement of many from the legal profession in the ranks of radicals further harmed their image. Burke's comments on the French revolutionary assembly in *Reflections* were revealing:

> Judge, sir, my surprise, when I found that a very great proportion of the assembly was composed of practitioners in the law. It was composed, not of distinguished magistrates, who had given pledges to their country of their science, prudence, and integrity; not of leading advocates, the glory of the bar; not of renowned professors in universities; -- but for the far greater part, as it must in such a number, of the inferior, unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the profession. There were distinguished exceptions; but the general composition was of obscure provincial advocates, of stewards of petty local jurisdictions, country attorneys, notaries, and the whole train of the ministers of municipal litigation.[40]

In Britain, too, legal practicioners were singled out as particularly prone to English Jacobinism. Letitia Sourby's brother, for example, had moved to London to become a conveyancer (an estate attorney) after embracing radical principles. Similarly, a letter to the editor of the *True Briton* from "Baxtero Murcotto" stated:

> It was observed in your Paper, the other day, "that most of the rising Barristers were Democrats;" I fear, it will be found from experience, that the expression is far too confined; and it is a melancholy truth, that the spirit of Democracy not only too much rages amongst them, but among Practicioners of a lower description . . . In the secondary Inns, that is, in the Inns of Chancery (in which many Gentlemen destined for the Bar take Chambers) . . . it is a notorious fact, that numbers of young men, of virtuous sentiments, educated in the principles, in the habit, and in the designs, nay even in affection for the very imperfections of the British Constitution, have no sooner been initiated in those nurseries of Democracy and Sedition, than they become inoculated with all the chimeras of the Rights of Man, and soon conceive an attachment for the horrid prodigies of its

[40]Burke, *Reflections*, 92-93.

production.[41]

The writer here emphasized the striking irony of the situation with the idea that those trained by their profession to uphold the law of the Constitution should at the same time acquire radical tendencies. This statement described well the crisis at the very heart of English Jacobinism: Britons of all ranks, despite their social and political duty to defend the Constitution, were breaking with this responsibility and embracing the very ideas that most threatened this system.

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Clearly, these newspapers perceived a schism in the social and political structure of the country, a fact signifying the presence of English Jacobinism. The question then remained as to how this break could be repaired and radicalism eliminated. In order to remedy this situation, the language and discourse in the *Sun*, *True Briton*, and *Anti-Jacobin* supported a united Britain based on a traditional social and political consensus that crossed lines of nation, class, and gender. The focus of this consolidation was, above all, the Constitution.

Achieving a political consensus involved support for a coalition government uniting Parliament behind Pitt, his ministry, and thus, the Constitution. Such a consensus was seen as an effective means of fighting the influence of radical ideas among the highest echelons of British leadership. Thus, these newspapers consistently opposed the Foxite Whigs, the motions by Charles Grey for reform, and, above all, the radical wing of the Whig party, the Friends of the People. At the same time, these publications worked

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[41]*True Briton*, 23 August 1797.

to create a solid pro-government block in Parliament by supporting the defection of the Portland Whigs from the Opposition and the consequent uniting of a sizeable majority of the legislature behind the administration of Pitt.

The best opportunity for creating such a coalition occurred in 1796, when a general Parliamentary election took place. During these elections, both the *Sun* and the *True Briton* became, in essence, campaign mouthpieces for candidates sympathetic to the ministry. Between late May and the time of the balloting in early June, both newspapers ran up to two pages of "advertisements" from candidates reminding voters of their past effectiveness in representing a particular borough or shire, if incumbents, and urging election in the coming days. Of the 75 names that appeared in the two papers, 55 (74%) were incumbents whose loyalty in Parliament would have been better known prior to 1796. Overall, 47 (63%) were candidates strongly associated with Pitt and 8 (11%) were essentially Portland Whigs already in coalition with the government for a grand total of 55 ministry supporters out of 75 candidates. Only 7 (9%) were independent candidates and 8 (11%) were Opposition members.[42] Clearly, the *Sun* and the *True Briton* were campaigning for a certain composition of Parliament based on consensus with the Pitt ministry. The success of loyalist candidates was evident in the fact that Pitt enjoyed the phenomenal support of 250 members in the House after the 1796 elections out of a total of 558 MPs.[43]

The *Sun* also explicitly connected the result of the election with the fight against

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[42] The affiliation of the five remaining candidates could not be determined, in most cases because they were not incumbents nor victors in the 1796 elections and thus never joined Parliament.

[43] Frank O'Gorman, "Pitt and the 'Tory' Reaction," in *Britain and the French* Revolution ed. H.T. Dickinson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 23-24.

English Jacobinism. Before the election, one article reflected on the seriousness of the situation:

> At no period since the establishment of the British Monarchy, did there exist a necessity so strong, so imperious, as that which at present exists for the exertion of extreme caution and circumspection in the choice of Representatives.[44]

Voters were being urged to choose more carefully than usual given the gravity of the situation and the potential for a further breakdown in political consensus. Closer to the time of the election, a second article expressed optimism that radicalism would be discouraged:

> The event of the General Election must have the best effect, both on the internal and external situation of this Country. It will convince the English Jacobins, how hopeless, from the unanimity of the People of England, is their cause . . .[45]

Once the results of the elections were finalized, the satisfaction of the loyalists in their certainty that a blow against radicalism had taken place was demonstrated by a letter to the editor from "R.S." claiming that the elections had returned the most "pure and uncorrupt" Parliament ever and applauding the *Sun* as a "Constitutional Paper."[46] The message of the elections and the commentary they elicited in these newspapers was therefore quite clear: the elections had been a type of plebiscite for Constitutional support and opposition to English Jacobinism. Another article explained:

> We wish him [Charles James Fox] and his Party to recollect, that the People of England send their Representatives to Parliament, not as candidates for place and power, but as Guardians of the Constitution, and protectors of the general welfare of the Community.[47]

The fact that so many pro-ministerial candidates had been elected, it was believed,

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[44] *Sun*, 25 May 1796.
[45] *Sun*, 2 June 1796.
[46] *Sun*, 3 June 1796.
[47] *Sun*, 15 August 1796.

revealed the widespread support among Britons for the Constitution and expressed the hope that political radicalism could be destroyed.

Political consensus, as the 1796 election demonstrated, was useless, however, without a social consensus as well: Britons created a pro-government Parliament by together voting against English Jacobins. Thus, these publications were equally devoted to combating radicalism by creating a social consensus among Britons of all ranks, genders, and nationalities. This coalition was based on a traditional view of society with its emphasis on hierarchy and the perceived proper role of each individual. Only this type of consensus, it was believed, could preserve the British Constitution as it had been inherited from previous generations.

English Jacobinism, according to the loyalists, threatened Britain by espousing radical principles such as levelling, violence, fanaticism, and atheism. These ideas became truly dangerous when they spread down the social hierarchy and became influential among the lower classes. To combat this, the loyalists consistently advocated the type of society described by writers such as Paley and Young in which each rank was ascribed a certain role. The upper class, by virtue of their superior education and property ownership, were designated the rulers of society with the responsibility of protecting the lower classes and the British system. The middle and lower classes, in return, had to remain loyal to the Constitution while providing the labor and financial support that kept the system afloat. A coalition united against the influence of English Jacobinism meant adherence to the prescribed social role given to each Briton.

This traditional society involved a justification for the position of each social class from the top down. Among the ruling class, these newspapers emphasized the possession

of certain attributes deemed central to loyalism. This was revealed, for instance, in the commentary on the increasing radicalism of the Whig Friends of the People. One article noted a contrast between previous members of this club and "late admitted members," prone to English Jacobinism. The former, it was noted, were described with words such as "gentlemen" and "independent," known for their possession of "fortune," a "liberal education," and "mild manners," as well as their tendency to be a "zealous friend to the Constitution by sacrificing all private friendships and connexions to its support." In contrast, a new member, clearly influenced by English Jacobinism, could "neither write nor read, possesses neither genius nor integrity," and "married a notorious old prostitute because she had a small annuity."[48] The message of such a statement connected proper social behavior with loyalism; the solution to English Jacobinism was to ensure virtue among the ruling classes. This was possible only if the upper ranks retained the characteristics of a gentleman so central to their role in society.

At the same time, loyalist support by these publications for social hierarchy also necessitated a defense of the traditional relationship between the richer classes and the poorer classes. The fact that the former enjoyed greater material comfort than the latter called for both a justification of the position of the upper class and a clarification of its responsibility to the lower classes. A letter to the editor from "Tacitus" reminded readers that inequalities in wealth and property were inevitable in society (an often-used argument), and that a man of fortune was "entitled to enjoy what he honestly acquires."[49] At the same time, the importance of charity was also emphasized, particularly as a means of preventing outbreaks of radicalism among the lower orders. An article submitted by

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[48] *Sun*, 2 May 1793.
[49] *True Briton*, 1 February 1793.

"S.T." applauded the recent founding of a Foundling Hospital for the purpose of providing care and education for widows and children of disabled or deceased sailors and soldiers. Such charity, it was argued, was vital because "at no period was it more material to attend to the education of the lower orders of society, on the bias of which the future security and happiness of the kingdom may in no slight degree depend."[50] These articles reinforced the importance of a traditional social role for the upper classes to fight English Jacobinism, both through their defense of the material prosperity of the ruling class and through their emphasis on paternalism as a means of combating radicalism among the lower ranks.

The middle and lower class Britons were likewise urged to retain their traditional role in society. This involved absolute loyalty to the Constitution and a willingness to accept their lower station in the hierarchy. This was suggested, for instance, in reference to the war taxes imposed by Pitt to finance the war. Many Britons opposed to the war argued that such taxes hit the middle and lower classes the hardest, bringing them financial ruin in order to wage costly campaigns. These newspapers consistently denied this, however, ascribing the majority of the financial responsibility to the wealthy. The language used to justify these assertions also hinted at the role best fulfilled by these orders:

> It may, perhaps, be useful to shew both to the Public in general, and to the Poor in particular, that the statement is untrue; and, that although the lower, as well as the middling ranks of People may be, and always are, much distressed by the high price of Provision in times of scarcity, yet the Poor are not starving and the distress they do feel is not on account of the increase of Taxes, because they never pay any.[51]

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[50] *Sun*, 30 January 1794.
[51] *Sun*,15 January 1796.

On one level, such language was a straightforward denial of the tax burden on the lower class. At the same time, the assertion that the poorer orders were always beset by financial difficulty, not just in times of war, and that they did not have to pay much in taxes reminded readers of the traditional place these Britons were supposed to hold in society. The inevitable inequality of society necessitated the existence of a lower order consistently faced with scarcity; nevertheless, the poor did not have to contribute directly to war taxation, since this was the responsibility of the richer classes. Scarcity in wartime did not, therefore, change the social role filled by the lower ranks.

Taken as a whole, then, the social hierarchy functioned best when members of each social class remained in their proper stations. In this manner, each class supported the others and preserved the social fabric of Britain, bringing prosperity to all. An allegory printed by the *Sun* about the mythical kingdom of "Nineveh" illustrated this point. In Nineveh, the story went, the nobles rose up and overthrew the king, only to be overthrown themselves by the husbandmen, who seized the land. The husbandmen, in turn, were overthrown by the servants, followed by the city inhabitants. Starvation set in, as nobody was available to work the land. Finally, salvation occurred in the form of intervention by the Lord, who reassigned the proper occupations and reminded the inhabitants to "let property be held sacred, the sure basis of the prosperity of a state."[52] The message of this simplistic story concerning the importance of hierarchy was obvious: prosperity was to be found only through respect for property and the coexistence of the various social classes in harmony.

Having defined the roles played by all classes of Britons in society and having

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[52] *Sun*, 5 July 1794.

emphasized the importance of hierarchy, these newspapers urged simultaneous support from all classes for the Constitution and the fight against Jacobinism. The *Anti-Jacobin* stated:

> That this description of those who are willing to exert themselves in the defence of their Country, should not comprehend every man of every class, and every Party, is a matter of regret. That there should be any class, or party, in which are to be found men, whom (instead of reckoning upon their assistance), the country must regard in the moment of public danger with suspicion and apprehension, is a circumstance which it is impossible to contemplate without astonishment and indignation.[53]

A consensus involving all classes was being urged in support of the British system as the primary means of fighting radicalism at home. The basis for this coalition was clearly the Constitution and the defense of the country against the aggression of the French. For the upper classes, this meant patriotic and charitable actions such as setting up war subscriptions and donating money and supplies to the war effort. The *Sun* and the *True Briton* published various lists of names, dominated by lords and earls, of Britons who had donated to subscriptions set up around the country. The lower classes likewise were expected to rally to the defense of the country. A letter in the *Sun* proclaimed:

> It is desirable that the lower classes should feel an interest in the Country in which they live, and that the Constitution should practically recommend itself to them by its effects on their bodies; this will much enlighten their understandings upon the subject of its excellence . . .[54]

This sentiment was also evident in the choice to publish an excerpt from the *Dialogues on the Rights of Britons, between a Farmer, a Sailor, and a Manufacturer* (1792-3) by John Bowles. In this early pro-war pamphlet, all three participants in the dialogue constructed by Bowles denounced the French and reaffirmed their loyalty to the

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[53] *Anti-Jacobin*, 23 April 1798.
[54] *Sun*, 10 March 1796.

government and the war effort. The manufacturer concluded:

> The sooner [one fights] the better; and whenever you go my best wishes will attend you. I feel a true British heart beat in my bosom; and no one will have more pleasure than myself in hearing of your victories.[55]

Thus, a coalition of support among all classes was urged as a means of fighting radicalism. Britons of all ranks were shown by these newspapers to be vital in the defense of the Constitution.

The loyalist papers did not stop with a consensus based on class, however. Loyalism was also expected to cross gender lines as well, and consequently, women were expected to be just as involved in fighting radicalism as men. Indeed, perceived support for English Jacobinism by women was quickly criticized in these newspapers. The *True Briton*, for instance, commented on a work by Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect it has Produced in Europe* (1794), in which she took a sympathetic view of many events of the Revolution. One point that particularly struck the reviewer as inappropriate was Wollstonecraft's portrayal of Marie Antoinette:

> . . . the writer has drawn a most scurrilous portrait of the late Queen, in which every odious and every trifling quality is imputed to the unfortunate Antoinette . . . Why then was the shameful, the odious, the unsexual slander [of Antoinette] suffered to remain in the work?[56]

The term "unsexual" in this passage was loaded with meaning. On the one hand, the reviewer, like Burke before him, was deeply concerned with the treatment of the Queen by revolutionaries. Wollstonecraft, in attacking Antoinette, was seen as withholding the polite treatment justified by the gender of the Queen. At the same, Wollstonecraft was

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[55] *Sun*, 15 February 1793.

[56] *True Briton*, 16 October 1797.

being attacked for rejecting loyalism and sympathizing with the Jacobins. Her "unsexual" decision to step outside of her responsibilities as a loyal female was as much a sign of English Jacobinism as the deviation from their proper social role by members of the ruling classes.

In response, these newspapers strongly emphasized participation in the defense of the Constitution by women, particularly in a manner that preserved their traditional social role. This was most clearly demonstrated through the coverage given to subscriptions for the war effort. On numerous occasions these newspapers praised the charitable donation by women. One letter from "Philo-Alanticus," for instance, singled out the "Honorable Lady Musgrave" for creating a subscription for the aid of the wife and child of a drowned soldier.[57] At other times, full lists of the contributors to such subscriptions were published, advertising the importance to readers of the war effort. The composition of these lists, dominated largely by countesses, viscountesses, marchionesses, and duchesses, revealed both the popularity of volunteerism among women and the overlap of such charity with the social responsibility of the upper classes.[58] Women were thus encouraged to participate in the defense of the Constitution as much as men, particularly those women whose volunteerism coincided with their responsibility as members of the upper class. In doing so, support of the war effort was possible between both genders without disrupting traditional social roles.

This was even more evident in the flannel waistcoat drive that took place in the winter of 1793-1794. The British army was notoriously ill-equipped in terms of clothing in this period because of the lack of a clothing department in the War Office. The

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[57] *Sun*, 15 August1794.
[58] See, for example, *Sun*, 12 March 1793.

responsibility for clothing the soldier thus fell on the colonels of each individual regiment, a system that offered the officers an opportunity to make a profit by poorly equipping their soldiers. The Duke of York's army stationed in Flanders was thus unprepared for the first winter in November, 1793.[59] The burden for assisting the soldiers, however, was aided by the charity of Britons at home, offering a chance to demonstrate one's dedication to fighting Jacobinism. Even more importantly, as the flannel waistcoat drive given coverage by the *Sun* and the *True Briton* demonstrated, clothing donations offered women a chance to become involved in the war effort.

The drive was conducted by the editor of the two newspapers, John Heriot, but initiated by the donation of an anonymous woman in November of 1793. For the next five months, the two newspapers gave repeated updates on the number of flannel waistcoats donated to the soldiers in Flanders and published the names of those contributing. The lists were dominated by the donations of women, including the largest single offering, 2000 waistcoats by the Duchess of Gloucester, a fact that did not go unnoticed. Numerous letters submitted to the newspapers applauded the charity of the female sex:

> The emulation in the Ladies of Great Britain, to shew their patriotism in supplying our soldiers with Flannel Waistcoats, distinguishes them as much for sensibility as they were already famed for beauty, while we admire them for both, and hold them up as an illustrious example to their sex, we are also convinced that "None but the Brave deserve the Fair."[60]

A few days later, similar sentiments appeared:

> . . . the heart of every Englishman must glow with sensations truly enviable, when he behold his Fair Countrywomen coming forward, uninfluenced by egotistic ambition, anticipating the Distresses of our Brave soldiery, who are fighting in

[59] Emsley, *British Society*, 37.
[60] *Sun*, 8 November 1793.

> defence of their King, Religion, and their Laws . . .[61]

Heriot himself wrote, upon receiving the first contribution:

> The Editor of the *Sun* has received the following Letter, accompanied with Twenty Flannel Waistcoats for the Army serving in Flanders. He would consider himself wanting in proper acknowledgement for the distinction paid to him, and deficient in his duty to his Country and her gallant Defenders, if he were for a moment to withhold from the Public this mark of sentiment and patriotism which does such honour to the Fair Sex.[62]

These were just a few of the many letters published praising the flannel waistcoat drive and in particular, the role of women in contributing to it. The drive, one letter noted, was an excellent means of demonstrating "love of the British Constitution" in a way that involved "a very inconsiderable expence."[63] The drive was so popular that Heriot had to urge subscribers to donate other items besides waistcoasts, including stockings, night caps, coats, shoes, and blankets. By April of 1794, the newspapers counted over 44,000 items collected to be sent to the army.

The involvement of women in this effort and the reaction it solicited offered an important revelation about the relation between gender and loyalism. On the one hand, these newspapers saw the importance of the involvement of all Britons, whether male or female, in the defense of the Constitution. Women who declined to participate in such efforts, such as Wollstonecraft, were denounced as failing to fulfill their responsibilities as Britons, and therefore they became synonymous with English Jacobins. On the other hand, loyalists did not want women to step outside of a traditional social role. Subscriptions, particularly clothing drives, were a means by which women participated in the war effort while maintaining this role, which emphasized private over public

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[61] *Sun*,12 November 1793.
[62] *True Briton*, 2 November 1793.
[63] *Sun*, 9 November 1793.

involvement. Women preserved their traditional station by supporting the war effort through charity, a more private venture, and by offering clothing that they had often sewn themselves.

Beyond class and gender, these newspapers were also concerned with building a consensus that included Britons throughout not only England and Wales, but also Scotland and Ireland. Londoners were not the only group that supported the Constitution. Articles repeatedly emphasized the geographically widespread existence of loyalist sentiment. During the flannel waistcoat drive, for example, one writer noted:

> Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, and some other Towns, which were supposed to contain a great number of friends to the French Jacobins, have been laudably emulous to wipe out the stain which a few factious and worthless persons had affixed on their Loyalty and Patriotism, by contributing to the ease and comfort of our noble little Army . . .[64]

Loyalism was also shown as extending into Scotland and Ireland. A letter from "Edinburgensis" reported:

> Loyalty towards our beloved Sovereign, humanity to the poor of his people, to his sailors, soldiers, wives and families, zeal in the means of preserving our happy Constitution, have reigned, and still reign in every heart . . . To arms the Noble Son of Scotia fly; each kindred soul, like wave impelling wave, resolves to lead each other forth to feats of War – their King and Constitution to defend.[65]

And in Ireland, particularly vital considering the attempts by the United Irishmen to aid in a French invasion:

> Notwithstanding the Republican Prints, [who] make a virtue of necessity in praising the spirit and gallantry exerted by all ranks of People in Ireland upon the present threats of an Invasion, -- these very prints have been hitherto describing the Irish as an oppressed people, disquieted with the English Government, and ready to throw themselves under French protection . . . the contrary fact is now fully known . . . the great and independent Mass of the Public were never more

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[64] *Sun*, 30 November 1793.
[65] *Sun*, 16 April 1795.

attached to their King and Constitution than they are at present . . .[66]

These articles thus emphasized the importance of a British, not just English, consensus in defense of the Constitution. Uncertainty in Scotland or Ireland was an invitation for invasion, a fact that the discovery of conspiracy attempts by the United Societies made all too clear for readers. As with class and gender, loyalist sentiment had to cross national borders in order to effectively defend the British Constitution.

Thus, the remedy prescribed by these newspapers as a means of fighting English Jacobinism and the schism created by the French Revolution was to create a united Britain fighting for the Constitution at home and abroad. So long as traditional social roles were upheld, Britons of all classes and both genders were invited to do so. The result of this call for consensus was a resoundingly patriotic statement in favor of Great Britain. The *True Briton* stated:

> We mean not to insinuate, as we have premised, that the French may not attempt an Invasion of this country – but we will ever maintain, that if we act like True Britons, such an event is more to be desired than dreaded: for the Enemy will then be convinced, that Britons United, may defy not only France, but the Whole World in arms.[67]

The defense of the Constitution against radicalism demanded, therefore, nothing less than a fully united Britain devoted to preserving the traditional social and political fabric of the country.

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[66] *True Briton*, 10 January 1797.
[67] *True Briton*, 24 February 1797.

Conclusion

The *Sun*, the *True Briton*, and the *Anti-Jacobin* were important components in the overall body of pro-government support that emerged due to the perceived threat of radicalism. They shared many of their techniques and arguments with contemporary loyalist literature, such as works by Burke, Bowles, Young, and More. Many of these writers were even cited specifically by these newspapers. At the same time, these three loyalist publications also provided a link with a long tradition of Constitutionalism stretching back through writers such as Paley and Blackstone to even earlier theorists drawing on traditional Whig and, to an extent, Tory ideologies that had been cemented by the Settlement of 1688. The social and political hierarchies long established under this tradition offered a framework for the loyalist ideas disseminated under the duress of war.

However, the contributors to these papers also had their own distinct role to play in the defense of the Constitution waged in the 1790s. The newspaper as a medium of communication allowed loyalists to distribute their opinions to a wide audience, both geographically and socially, while government involvement helped ensure solvency. Newspapers were distributed throughout Britain by means of a posting system that the government, sympathetic to these particular publications, influenced heavily. Meanwhile, these papers consciously sought diverse support in the fight against English Jacobinism, including men, women, rich, poor, English, Scottish, and Irish. The circulation of papers free of charge and the reading of papers out loud in public areas allowed the loyalist press, though primarily targeting an upper- and middle-class readership, to reach Britons of a variety of ranks.

These newspapers also provided a consistent voice for the government to use in its fight against potential sedition. Subsidies to both the newspapers themselves and to many of the their writers attested to the government's view of the loyalist press as a worthwhile means of disseminating the sentiments of the Pitt ministry, the majority in Parliament, and the monarchy itself in regards to the threat of Jacobinism. The fact that many contributors, particularly in the case of the *Anti-Jacobin*, were also state officials only made this connection between government opinion and the press closer. The actions taken by the British government to prevent revolution, including legislative acts and prosecution, suggested a real concern on the part of officials that an insurrection was possible. These newspapers provided yet another tool for the government to use in its offensive against the possibility of a revolution in Britain.

Finally, the popularity of these newspapers suggested that among Britons, too, there were loyalist sympathies that mirrored the concerns of the government. The very longevity of the *Sun* and the *True Briton* in a competitive newspaper market, circulating into the second decade of the nineteenth-century even after government funding had ceased, demonstrated the popularity of these publications among readers. The *Anti-Jacobin* was certainly popular in its short run as well, even if the circulation figures given by its editors were taken to be exaggerations. The success of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* also attested to the positive reception of the publication's focus among Britons. The loyalist press thus reflected the sentiments of its readers as well.

An analysis of the effectiveness of these papers in combating radicalism, however, moves into the realm of a debate that has not been settled among historians. The response of the government to the Revolution and the war indicated that it perceived

a real threat of revolution at home; determining the real possibility of such an event has been more difficult. Moreover, if there has been uncertainty over the seriousness of revolutionary action, there has been equal uncertainty over the effectiveness of efforts to combat radicalism. On the one hand, it can be argued that the absence of truly revolutionary activity in Britain was the result of anti-radical campaigning by the APLP, the government, loyalist writers, and loyalist newspapers. On the other hand, it can be argued that the widespread unrest necessary for revolution simply did not exist in the first place. Studies on this topic are extensive and, as yet, inconclusive.

Ultimately, these newspapers are most useful for their insight into loyalist thought itself. The manner in which these writers responded to the perceived threat of radicalism provides a detailed picture of mainstream late eighteenth-century thought and the way in which this affected outlooks on politics and society. The concern for the breakdown of traditional social and political role evident within the pages of these papers revealed beliefs held by contemporaries that the ideas of the French Revolution truly threatened the very core of British society. The relevancy and effectiveness of the imagery used to combat this fear, that of a Britain united behind the excellence of the Constitution, demonstrated the continuing importance of traditional ideas in the 1790s. Like Edmund Burke, John Reeves, William Pitt, or any number of government supporters, the contributors to these newspapers truly believed that the British system was a benevolent and effective government suited to the protection of traditional social structures and morals. To defend Britain in wartime meant building support for its systems and institutions against attacks from within just as much as it meant fighting the enemy with

guns and swords abroad. Only then, it was believed, could the radical threat be vanquished.

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